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DONALD OENSLAGER

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# The HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

VOL XIII, No. 5

A National Publication Devoted to Dramatics in the Secondary Schools

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FEBRUARY, 1942





# PLAYS OF THE PRESENT MOMENT



## *No Jade Shall Burn*

A drama in 1 act, by Arthur Barrett; 2 m, 3 w. Time, 20 min.—A drama of China at war with Japan—timely and tremendously moving. The scene is a Chinese home, and we hear the drone of the Japanese bombers in the background. Old Cheng-u resents the new ideas of her son Kai. She imagines that he exaggerates the threat of the Japanese, and is horrified that Kai wants to marry Su Ling, a classmate at the university, instead of the fiancée his parents chose for him. Then, in a scene of rising tension, Su Ling arrives, panting and terrified. A Japanese soldier accosted her. She escaped, but knowing he is seeking her, Cheng-u hides the girl and tricks the soldier. The expedient succeeds momentarily, and then the brutal soldier returns for his revenge. He boasts that China will be destroyed. Realizing well the threat to her beloved country as well as to her own family, Cheng-u, with passionate courage, stabs the soldier with her scissors and the little family, symbolizing the old China and the new, are united in common patriotism against the common enemy . . . Japan! Royalty, \$5.00. Price, 35c

## *"V" as in Victory*

A drama in 1 act, by Christopher Sergel; 2 m, 2 w. Time, 20 min.—Forty miles from Berlin, in a darkened cellar room, with the high-pitched sound of a wireless tapping out—dot, dot, dot, dash—"V" in Morse code—stand four people fighting for victory. Schwartz is seated at the telegraph key, sending out the "V." Beside him is his strong comrade, Heuck, who is working the radio controls. Anxiously watching out the doors are Hilda and Sarah. They are about to begin their broadcast from the Freedom Station. The girls fear that perhaps they're taking these risks in vain. Sarah points out that in America girls wear "V" in their hats, and play "V" games—that it seems like a silly fad to them. Then a person that they all realize is a Gestapo agent discovers them. They give their stirring message through the radio as the Gestapo arrives. As they're about to go out and face the inevitable consequences, they hear the sound of bombers overhead—American bombers on their way to Berlin. "Hear, Sarah," cries Schwartz, "from the girls with the 'V's' in their hats!" Royalty, \$5.00; \$2.50 if no admission is charged. Price, 35c

## *Guns against the Snow*

A drama in 1 act, by Harold Mers; 3 m, 1 w. Time, 20 min.—Here is a powerful drama of war near the Panama Canal that will win contests. Timely, powerful, it etches in vivid, dynamic lines the personality of the dictator who dares defy even the power of God. At General Vulturo's headquarters in the tropics he is ready to launch his all-out attack on the Panama Canal. Vulturo has reason to suspect the loyalty of one of his lieutenants, and in a scene of smashing force and triumphant brutality he unmasks and shoots the man . . . whom a decent wish to spare civilians the horrors of a gas attack has made suspect. Elated by this triumph, Vulturo is ready to boast of his power when his guards bring in a woman, found wandering near their tanks. She is suspected of being a spy, but Vulturo quickly satisfies himself that this is untrue. He brags of his limitless power, and the woman warns him that absolute power is in the hands of God alone. Vulturo mocks her piety and blasphemes God . . . nothing . . . can resist him! Then quietly, softly, against the tropical landscape we see the flutter of snowflakes! Snow in the tropics! Snow that will keep his bombers on the ground. A powerful, beautiful, memorable play and a natural for any contest. Royalty, \$5.00. Price, 50c

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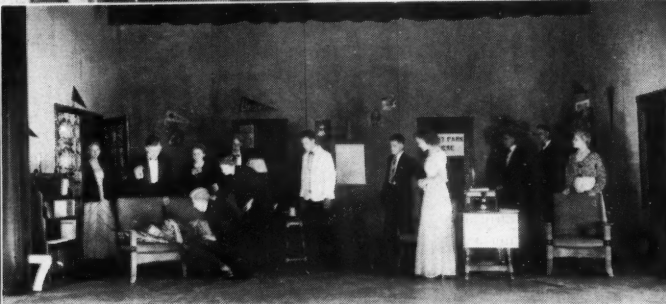
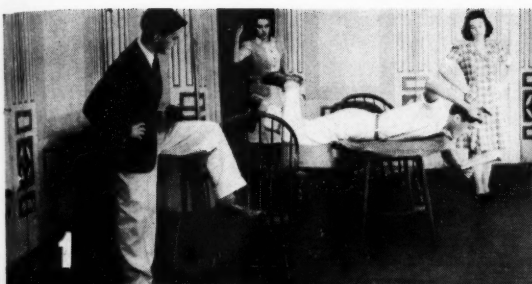
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1. Scene from *The Tin Hero*, a production of Thespian Troupe No. 400 at the Edward Lee McClain High School, Greenfield, Ohio. Mr. Wylie Fetherlin, director. 2. Patricia Grossman in *Berkeley Square* at the Cleveland Heights, Ohio, High School (Troupe No. 410). Dr. Dina Rees Evans, director. 3. *Kathleen's Debut*, an original one-act play by members of Troupe No. 254 at the B. M. C. Durfee High School, Fall River, Mass. Miss Barbara Wellington, director. 4. Scene from *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* at the Visitation High School (Troupe No. 287), Chicago, Ill. Directed by Mr. Howard Rooney. 5. Thespians Mary A. Reed, Priscilla Smith, and Mary L. Lane in *Ladies in Retirement* at the Washington High School (Troupe No.

178), Massillon, Ohio. Directed by Mr. M. W. Wickersham. 6. Cast for the production of *June Mad* at the Middletown, New York, High School (Troupe No. 74). Directed by Mr. Miles S. McLain. 7. Scene from *Spring Fever* given by members of Troupe No. 269 at the Boonville, Indiana, High School. Miss Ravia Garrison, director. 8. Act I from *Little Women* as given by Troupe No. 261 at the Fairmont, Minn., High School under the direction of Miss Caryl Meyer. 9. Scene from a test performance of *Sky Road* given by members of Troupe No. 364 at the Jamestown, New York, High School. Directed by Miss Myrtle L. Paetznick.

# THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

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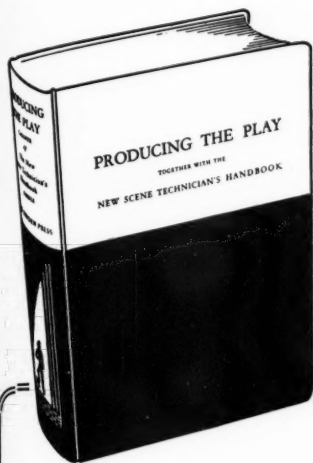
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# Broadway at a Glance

by MARGARET WENTWORTH

Broadway Drama Critic, New York City

## Macbeth

THE superb production of *Macbeth*, with Judith Anderson's performance equalling if not surpassing that of Maurice Evans, is easily an outstanding theatrical event of this season. Announced as for a limited run, tickets are now being sold to February first. In spite of its power, *Macbeth* has failed more often in recent years than any other of Shakespeare's tragedies.

As a matter of cold historical fact, assassination was a common method of getting a crown in the twelfth century and the real Macbeth is said to have ruled well for his time and never to have had his sleep broken by visions of a gory Duncan or Banquo. But Shakespeare has endowed him with a keen intellect and a sense of honor which he himself has outraged. Lady Macbeth too, though she boasts of her courage, is betrayed by her nerves and the murder is avenged long before Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.

Margaret Webster, who staged and directed the play, made the second encounter with the witches, one of Macbeth's haunted dreams, and it was a most effective device. It is interesting to remember that James was on the throne when the play was written and that the king was a devout believer in witches and wrote a book about demonology. Also that descendant of Banquo's who wore a triple crown was James himself, king of England, Scotland and Ireland.

The play will probably tour after leaving New York and no Thespian who can possibly see it should fail to do so.

## Let's Face It

The outstanding musical success is *Let's Face It!* which promoted Danny Kaye to the ranks of stardom. He has several long patter songs which he gets off with unbelievable speed and accuracy. The plot deals with three draftees being practically kidnapped by three wives whose husbands have gone fishing and who catch more than they bargained for. The fiancées of the soldiers execute a brilliant rescue and all is well at the final curtain. But of course the plot of a musical matters little. The quick, clever twists of fate, the gay dialogue, the excellent singing, dancing and acting have put the musical at the front of such offerings.

## Sons O'Fun

*Sons O'Fun*, cashing in on the reputation established by *Hellz-a-Poppin*, is also selling out. The audience is warned to go prepared to protect itself and, apparently, there is some difficulty in doing so, as practical jokes are in order or, rather in most admired disorder. If you like that sort of thing, and crowds do, this is your dish.

## Blithe Spirit

Now *Blithe Spirit* is what its name implies—a gay entertainment which, nevertheless, does not forget that you did not check your brains at the door. Clifton Webb's first wife has died and he has remarried; but he insists on bringing a medium into their home to see if she can call back his lost Leonora. She does and the consequences are harrowing. Isn't it bad enough to have an earthly rival without having a spook in the house whom you can't even see? With Mr. Coward's gift for the ludicrous both in writing and action and with Peggy Wood as his wife and Mildred Natwick as the medium, the play is hilarious from start to finish.

## Junior Miss

I do wish every Thespian could see *Junior Miss*, one of the most ingratiating comedies of child-life since Booth Tarkington's *Seventeen*. Its heroine, Judy (Patricia Peardon), is only fourteen and is consumed with jealousy because her sister Lois, sixteen, has "men" come to see her while it is as much as Judy can do to secure an escort for the party which is the climax of the play.

The play is laid at Christmas time and Judy's delight at the slippers with high heels, in which she turns her ankle at every other step and her scorn of the doll, which she cannot resist hugging when she finds herself alone, show how she is treading where the brook and river meet. One feels that Judy may be a Claudia when she grows up, for she has the same tendency to say and do the wrong thing at the wrong time; but she has the charm of a young colt and when she goes out in her first formal, you know she is set for a successful race.

## Letters to Lucerne

Another play of adolescence which has gentle charm but is set in a minor key is *Letters To Lucerne*. Six girls in a boarding school in Switzerland, having sworn friendship, cement it by reading aloud in the dormitory at night their letters from home. Since one is German, one Polish, one French, one English and two American, the effort at mutual understanding is disrupted when the news of the invasion of Poland and the entry of France and England into the war comes. The German girl, who is not by any means a Nazi, nevertheless is goaded by feeling her country condemned without even a hearing. A tremulous peace is re-established at the end of the play but one feels that it is precarious.

The girls' parts are all taken by daughters of famous fathers, except the German, who is a refugee here doing her first play in English. But Sonya Itokowski, whose father is the orchestra leader, is the Pole;

the French girl is daughter of Richard Barthelmess; Nancy Wiman's father produced the play. Clive Brook, the English actor, is represented by his daughter, Faith; and Stephen Avery, writer, completes the roster. And those fathers have no reason not to be just as proud of their daughters as the girls undoubtedly are of them.

## Theatre

*Theatre*, the play adapted from Somerset Maugham's book of the same name, in which Cornelia Otis Skinner is starring, will be on the road by the time this appears. It is a melodrama on familiar lines, the actress who can no longer take ingenue roles, having a flirtation to build up her ego. It is very well done but seems scarcely worth the doing.

## Hope For A Harvest

*Hope For A Harvest*, on the other hand, carries a fine message. Miss Treadwell, who wrote it, is concerned with the disappearance of life rooted in the soil, and content, with independence, to do without cars, motion pictures, road houses and so on. She puts her argument in the mouth of Florence Eldridge and gives Frederic March his opportunity to tell of all the farmer's difficulties both in raising and in marketing his crops. At the end of the play, however, he has accepted her brave statement that they can make more than a living from the old place; they can make a life. This play seems especially appropriate just now when we are all thinking seriously of our American way of life. People closer to the soil than New York critics will rate it more highly than most of them did.

## Spring Again

*Spring Again* employs the skill of Grace George and C. Aubrey Smith and it is a lesson in acting to watch those two veterans get every ounce of juice out of their lines. Her marriage with him has been haunted for years by her dead father-in-law whose son has almost defied him. How she succeeds in turning the general from a liability into an asset is good farce material. It looks so easy when they do it and it could bog down into such a tissue of improbabilities if a heavy hand were laid on its fabric.

## Angel Street

*Angel Street* is the most inappropriately named play of horror I remember. The idea was probably one of irony but I shudder to think that someone might go expecting to find another *Pomander Walk*. With only five characters and a single set it is absorbing from start to finish. Vincent Price is a villain who has committed a murder years before and has come back to the house where it was done in hopes of finding the booty which slipped through his fingers. With him is his terrified wife whom he is deliberately trying to drive mad. Leo G. Carroll is the kindly Scotland Yard man who comes to the rescue when you feel you cannot bear it another minute.



The last scene of George Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* as revived last year by Katharine Cornell. Donald Oenslager designed the settings. (Photo courtesy of Mr. Oenslager.)

## Donald Oenslager

by BARNARD HEWITT

Chairman, Dramatics Committee, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, N. Y.



Prof. Hewitt

SCENERY for more than a hundred productions in sixteen years, that is the record of Donald Oenslager's service in the American theatre. He is not only one of our most prolific but also one of our most versatile designers; he has designed with equal success for drama, musical comedy, opera, and ballet. For many productions he has designed the costumes also, and he always supervises the lighting of productions he designs. Often after late hours with the electricians he catches an early morning train to New Haven to deliver a lecture on scene design, for he is Associate Professor in the Yale Department of Drama and manages to combine the strenuous life of one of Broadway's busiest designers with the teaching of his art.

The strenuous life has apparently agreed with Oenslager. He looks even younger than his thirty-nine years, more like an athlete than an artist, and he is known for his pleasant disposition and his ability to get along with people. About the only sign of so-called "artistic temperament" is his ability to lose hats. He averages about one per production, though sometimes the lost headgear turns up weeks or months later most unexpectedly. After *You Can't Take It With You* had been some months on its successful way, he stopped in to see how his setting was surviving the violent living of the Sycamore family and found his lost hat tacked to the clothes tree on the setting. It had become a set prop. Another time, when the set for *Robin Landing* was being struck someone opened a pickle crock which had been a part of the bar equipment, and there, carefully salted away, was an Oenslager hat.

Oenslager seems to be one of those

happy people who has always known what he wanted to do. His interest in the theatre goes back as far as he can remember. As a boy in Harrisburg, Pa., he was thrilled by *Rip Van Winkle*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Music Master* and attempted to reproduce them in a soap-box theatre. At the age of ten he built scenery for an original play, *The Burning of Rome* and, carried away by a passion for realism, nearly burnt down the Oenslager home as well as his theatre. At Philips-Exeter he designed settings for school plays and constructed models of Elizabethan stages. At Harvard he was active in the famous 47 Workshop and Art Director of the Harvard Dramatic Club. On his graduation in 1923, a Sachs Fine Arts Fellowship enabled him to spend a year studying stage direction and scene design in most of the principal countries of Europe. When he returned he began work in the theatre as an actor at the Greenwich Village Theatre then under the direction of Robert Edmond Jones and Kenneth Macgowan. His first part was that of a Guest in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* at a salary of \$20 a week. A year later he was appointed to the faculty of the newly-established Yale Department of Drama. That same year he designed his first Broadway production, a ballet called *Sooner or Later*, and was launched on a career which soon brought him recognition as one of America's leading designers.

For all his success, Oenslager is a modest man, and there is nothing highflown about his notion of the art of scene design. "Good scene designing," he says in the Introduction to his book *Scenery Then and Now*, "is good thinking, supplemented by reasonable performance in execution." As designer, he thinks first of the entire stage scene: "the actor in a play on a

This is the fourth in a series of articles by Professor Hewitt on outstanding American scene designers of today. Lee Simonson will be the subject for his article in our March issue.—Editor.

stage before an audience." Like Lee Simonson and Mordecai Gorelik, he begins with the floorplan. He works out carefully the use of the stage space: the areas needed for acting, the location of the entrances and exits, the placement of furniture and other pieces to be used by the actor, the relation of the acting areas to the off-stage space, the sources of illumination, etc. When this horizontal plan is complete, he draws the elevation: a plan of the setting in the vertical dimension. Windows, doors, steps, pillars, which were first located on the floorplan are given form on the vertical plane. Floorplan and elevation are both prepared to scale on graph paper. Oenslager does not use sketches at any time during the preparation of the scenery, though when the setting is built, painted, and lighted, he may record the accomplished fact in a sketch.

Oenslager's work can almost be divided into two groups, his designs for a multitude of run-of-the-mill Broadway plays and musicals, and his designs for projects (many of which have become productions) for heroic plays and opera. In the first group, his work has always shown the scrupulous care of the well-trained craftsman. Such were his settings for musicals like *Red Hot and Blue* and for *I'd Rather Be Right*, gay and usable but not striking. His settings for such plays as *First Lady*, *Stage Door*, *You Can't Take It With You* and *My Sister Eileen* were workmanlike realistic settings serving unobtrusively the modest scenic needs of those plays.

Occasionally a Broadway production has demanded more of him. His settings for Katharine Cornell's revival of Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* last year did more than suit the physical requirements of the action, they set the style of the production warm in color and strongly pictorial in character. In Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Oenslager had to set a play in which realism rose to the heights of poetry, and he designed for it three settings which through their dignity and strength gave visual expression to the play's high seriousness. The setting for the first and last scenes, with its great tree, wild underbrush, and vista of winding river was beautifully conceived and executed.



Scene from the one-act play, *The Crumbs that Fall*, a production of Thespian Troupe No. 432 at the Kingsport, Tenn., High School. Directed by Miss Nancy C. Wylie.

When *The American Way*, the Kaufman and Hart patriotic spectacle, swept into the huge Center Theater in 1939, with flags flying and drums rolling, vast settings by Donald Oenslager provided varied acting levels and exciting backgrounds for its many scenes: from the dock at Ellis Island to the main street and central square of an Ohio town—Civil War monument and all.

However, Broadway has not inspired Oenslager's most exciting work. As Norris Houghton says, "he betrays his greatest enthusiasm when he shows the sketches for elaborate projects he has conceived." In 1936 he published *Scenery Then and Now*, a volume of such sketches with notes on the production among others of Aeschylus' heroic *Prometheus Bound*, Aristophanes *The Birds*, reconceived in terms of aeronautics, *Hamlet*, Molière's *The Would-Be Gentleman*, Goethe's *Egmont*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*, and Ibsen's poetic drama *Brand*. In these projects, the craftsman gives way wholly before the artist. Oenslager's real creative power appears unrestrained. I do not mean to suggest that the projects are impractical. Many of them have been brought to life on the stage, several by the Yale School of the Drama.

One of the most exciting of these projects—the *Tristan and Isolde*—was produced by the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Philadelphia Academy of Music in 1934. There was nothing in the settings of Broadway realism nor yet of the heavy and tasteless romanticism of the traditional Wagnerian scenery. They were magnificently symbolic. The opera was conceived as a great conflict between two worlds, the inner spiritual world of the love between Tristan and Isolde, and the everyday, outer world, "reality versus pure spirit—Day against Night." Oenslager chose to symbolize the inner world of the lovers by Night achieved by darkness and by gauzes, the world of everyday reality by Day and by the ever-present sea. Night and Day, the gauzes and the shining sea ebbed and flowered around the lovers on shipboard or on land, giving visual expression to the essential conflict of the

## SUMMARY

WE have prepared a summary of the important sectional meetings on drama and dramatics held at the convention of the American Educational Theatre Association in Detroit on December 29, 30, 31. Copies of this summary were sent with the January News-Letter to all Thespian Sponsors. Others interested in securing a copy free of charge should address their request to The National Thespian Society, College Hill Station, Cincinnati, Ohio.

action and the music. Tristan's ship was no more than a great sail and two flights of steps. For Act Two, King Mark's castle rose from a rocky promontory jutting out into the sea. Isolde's chamber opened on a terrace in the middle ground. Folds of bluish gauze confined the scene on either side, ready to enfold the lovers in the world of Night. Tristan's manor, scene of the tragic conclusion, consisted of walled battlements, weighed down, bent, and deformed with fading life like the dying hero, set high and surrounded by the glassy sea. With Isolde's arrival, folds of gauze closed in again on the lovers united finally in the Night of Death.

It is worth noting, parenthetically, that this production of *Tristan and Isolde* and another quite different but nonetheless novel production of *Der Rosenkavalier* have shown Oenslager clearly that audiences must be educated gradually to the newer methods of staging, particularly opera audiences. Not that the scenery failed, it was too successful. Oenslager discovered that though the scenery was carefully designed to support the music, its novelty drew undue attention to itself.

He has made great use of color to symbolize directly essential elements in the play. He does not, however, accept some of the traditional color symbolism. For instance, he does not believe that comedy

requires a light setting and tragedy a dark. He successfully set a comedy, *For-saking All Others*, in walls of deep blue-violet and *Hamlet* in walls of chalky white. On Tristan's ship all was blue and blue-white until Mark's envoys entered and filled the whole scene with costumes of yellow and red. Tristan died in a setting the color of the last autumn leaves, pale yellow, fading to brown.

Oenslager has always regarded light as vital to scene design. Thomas Wilfred's Color Organ was used in Oenslager's first production, the ballet, *Sooner or Later*, to project backgrounds on a neutral drop. On occasion since he has depended almost wholly upon light to provide the settings for a play.

Such was the production of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, by the Yale Department of Drama in 1931. The only permanent scenery was a high semi-circular cyclorama hung behind folds of dark gauze, and a low circular mound in center stage. The changes of scene were effected by changes in the light on the playing area and by projecting forms with Linna-bach lanterns on the cyclorama from the front and from behind. Oenslager wished the settings literally to act, to be an ever-changing but ever-present embodiment of Brutus Jones' fears. Through this use of light, the forms of Jones' fevered imagination driven by the rising tempo of the tomtom could grow out of the darkness, take definite shape, blur, fade away, and be replaced by new forms. Beginning as jungle trees, the projections grew more and more like primitive negro sculpture. In the convict scene they were towering barriers of rough posts like prison bars, in the slave market sculptured totems, in the slave ship, monstrous negro fetishes, etc. At the end of the play, the dark forms vanished, melting into beach and sky, with a bank of foamy clouds on the horizon.

When he talks about scene design, Oenslager is likely to stress the necessity for adaptability, for suiting the scenery to the play. This adaptability is clearly one of his own great assets. It has enabled him to achieve practical success without losing his poetic vision or weakening his creative imagination.

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# The Stage in Mexico

by WILLIS KNAPP JONES

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THE Greek theatre, it is believed, had its beginnings in religious festivities, centering about Bacchus, god of wine. Dithyrambic choruses and dances before his altar eventually became the drama of Thespis, from which by way of a chorus of satyrs (in Greek "tragoi"), to the tragedies of Aeschylus.



Prof. Jones

The Aztecs of Mexico, too, had their religious ceremonies. Some were extremely dramatic, such as the one in honor of Toci, goddess of ancestor worship. Well-born maidens, arrayed in their best clothes, were summoned to a banquet. One of them, selected by lot, was then seized and dragged to the temple where she was beheaded and skinned. Clad in her skin, an Aztec boy made a pilgrimage to the temple of the war god where he slew four captives.

During another festival in honor of the god of spring, Xipe, Aztec priests flayed numberless war captives and donned their tattered hides as symbol of the earth's new vegetation.

Drama failed to develop from these Mexican religious rituals, however, as it had done in Greece, perhaps because no such ironic commentaries on life as appeared in the comedies of Aristophanes would be tolerated under the despotic rule of the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma. Maybe they felt that actual human sacrifices where the victims' chests were slashed open with stone knives and their still-beating hearts were wrenched out were either so brutal or so dramatic that no playwright felt capable of creating an equal effect on an artificial stage.

Therefore it was not till the priests who accompanied Cortés introduced dramatic interpretations of religious principles that Mexico had drama. Of the early productions we know very little, though we can read in Bernal Díaz del Castillo's account that a puppeteer went along to entertain Cortés's expedition of 1524 to Hibueras. The earliest preserved play, not only of Mexico, but of the New World, is the anonymous *Coloquio de los cuatro últimos reyes de Tlaxcala en Nueva España* (*Dialog of the Last Four Kings of Tlaxcala in Mexico*), written in a variety of verse forms, perhaps by the priest Toribio de Benavente.

Nor are we sure of the date of the first theatre. Until 1585, most plays were probably given in the churches, but in that year the Church Council forbade all worldly songs, dances, and plays in church buildings. The company of Alonso de

Prof. Jones will continue his series of articles in our March issue with a discussion of the theatre and drama in Chile.—Editor.

Buenrostro, who had been invited to present the Corpus Christi plays of 1586, had to perform in the plaza of Mexico City. It is quite probable, therefore, that the theatres constructed in 1597 in the home of Francisco de León and in the Viceroy's palace marked the first permanent stages in Mexico, but they were both so tiny that when two comedies were planned as part of the ceremonies of welcome (Dec. 9-13, 1603) to the Viceroy Juan de Mendoza, it was decided to set up an open air stage.

For a long time, practically all drama was imported from Spain rather than

written locally. The reason is obvious. Spain was producing plays; ships were bringing manuscripts and printed copies; and it was cheaper to pirate a hit from Madrid than to pay for one written by a Mexican author. That is the reason we hear of so few local dramatists.

The country's greatest playwright, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (1581-1639), though born in Mexico City and receiving his initial education there, is generally classified among Spain's dramatists, since he went to Salamanca in 1600 to finish his education. Though he may have written a few plays before he left his native land, and others when he came back in 1608 for a five years' visit, the thesis plays like *Las paredes oyen* (*Walls Have Ears*) and *La verdad sospechosa* (*A Liar By Choice*) which place him among the four great dramatists of Spain's Golden Age, were written and produced in Madrid.

Maybe Alarcón was wise to remain in Spain, in spite of virulent attacks by Spaniards who poked fun at his humped back,



Interior of the Alameda Theatre, Mexico City, Mexico. (Photo by Brehme. Published by permission of Asociacion Mexicana de Turismo.)

called him "baboon," and partly sawed through his scenery to make the sets collapse during performances of his plays. The lot of Mexican-born dramatists who remained at home was none too pleasant if we can generalize from the fate of the author of the comedy *Al fin se canta la gloria* (*A Song of Glory*). He figured in an *auto de fe*, April 11, 1649, and was likely burned at the stake.

Several dramatists from Madrid came to Mexico for one reason or other, but their output did not enrich Mexico's drama. Not till the second half of the 17th century do we find a couple of unquestionably Mexican dramatists. One was Agustín Salazar y Torres who in plot and technique aped the Spanish playwrights. The other was a nun, born, educated, and buried in her native Mexico.

Juana Inés de Asbaje y Ramírez de Cantillana, called in the flamboyant language of her time "The Tenth Muse," was the kind of girl who gave up her favorite food, cheese, because she heard it dulled the brain, and who cut her hair short and refused to let it grow until she had learned Latin, explaining: "A stupid head ought not to be beautiful."

Since the University of Mexico admitted only men, she threatened to disguise herself in trousers in order to attend classes. Instead she was persuaded to become lady-in-waiting to the wife of the Viceroy. At court she was "tormented for her wit and pursued for her beauty," as she reported, so that she took the veil and entered a convent. But even as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, she did not succeed in getting away from the world. Her cell, with its library of four thousand volumes, became the gathering place of the intellectuals of Mexico.

To this witty nun, the theatre was a place to display her gift for light, amusing conversation. In the three volumes which contain her collected work appear a *loa* (monolog) in praise of Jesus, three short religious plays, and two comedies, *Amor es más laberinto* (*Love Is a Labyrinth*)

in collaboration with a priest, Juan de Guevara, and something more autobiographical, *Los empeños de una casa* (*Domestic Interests*) like Lope de Vega's *Discreta enamorada*. The plays of this nun are slight, however, lacking in fundamental struggle, and not much more than ornaments to her real fame as a poet. America never had a feminine dramatist till Gertrudis Gómez de Aveiláneda was born in Cuba in 1814.

There should be nothing surprising in finding a nun writing comedies when the theatre itself was exploited as a source of income by several religious orders. About 1670 the Order of St. Hippolytus constructed Mexico's first edifice especially designed as a theatre, on grounds near the cemetery of its Royal Hospital for Indians. While this playhouse could not compare with the lovely Alameda Theatre, recently built in Mexico as a movie house, at the time of its opening, in 1673, under the management of Mateo de Jaramillo, it was considered the finest theatre in the Spanish-speaking world.

The stage was forty-five feet by twenty-four, and elevated four and a half feet above the ground. The rich spectators reached their boxes through the corridors of the hospital and sat under arches and behind balustrades with shutters that could be removed if the theatre-goers did not mind having others stare at them. For the poorer spectators, a patio for standing room and a gallery where men and women were separated by a partition, were provided.

On January 19, 1772, this theatre suffered the fate of so many wooden buildings and burned during a prophetic performance of *Ruina e incendio de Jerusalén* (*Ruin and Burning of Jerusalem*). Appropriately enough, playbills for the next performance had promised *Aquí fué Troya* (*Hellzapoppin*).

The Mexican chronicler Maria y Campos has unearthed records of this building which show that its yearly rent for the theatrical season running from Easter Sun-

day to Ash Wednesday brought as much as three thousand pesos to the Order, so it is no wonder that the Hospitalers quickly replaced the burned building by another theatre.

Other playhouses also sprang up. One was erected in 1725. Another started in 1753 as Coliseo Nuevo, was rechristened Teatro Principal, and lasted till March 1, 1931, when flames caught up to it. Later the Teatro Hidalgo, which in 1880 was the first in Mexico to use gas for illumination, opened its doors.

There were even Mexican puppet theatres. Olavarría y Ferrari mention four permanent puppet shows, and by the laws of 1786 we deduce that puppeteers also roamed the streets and countrysides. At one time the famous General Riva Palacio, who received the sword of surrender from Emperor Maximilian, owned a share in such a venture and wrote plays for the little dummies.

Even with all these buildings, one could not say that the stage in Mexico was flourishing. The Nineteenth Century began with literary groups and newspapers offering prizes for good plays, but without much success. The leading dramatist was Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza, a man now claimed by Spain though he was born in Vera Cruz and died in Mexico City.

Gorostiza's father was a Spanish general brought to Nueva España while it was still a colony of Spain. His mother, who could trace her ancestry to the most famous woman writer in Spain, Santa Teresa de Jesús, returned to Spain with her five-year-old Manuel, when the general died. So it was on Spanish soil that Gorostiza wrote and produced his first play, *Indulgencia para todos* (*Indulgence for All*), in 1813. But he became involved in the revolutionary movement and had to flee, so that it was in France and Belgium that he published his plays and became so well known that Mexico, now an independent nation, thought it worth while remembering that this distinguished figure belonged by birth to her. He was invited to become a Mexican citizen and promptly received diplomatic missions that took him to many European capitals, including London.

While in England he wrote and published what is probably his best known comedy, *Contigo pan y cebolla* (*Bread and Onions With Thee*), contrived supposedly for the purpose of curing the romantic ideas of his daughter Luisa.

According to books, Love never runs smoothly, so Matilde, the romantic heroine of the play, is sure that her feeling for Eduardo cannot be real love, since everybody approves of it. Accordingly, she refuses him. The young man, who understands her feelings, contrives a scheme to make Matilde's father appear to object to the marriage, so that her interest in Eduardo is revived and she agrees to elope with him and try bread and onions in some garret. The rest of the amusing play shows how quickly she is disillusioned and how glad she is when her father welcomes her back to wealth and security.



Scene from the one-act play, *The Witch's Curse*, as given by members of Thespian Troupe No. 194 of the Keokuk, Iowa, High School at the Iowa Play Production Festival. Awarded a rating of Excellent. Directed by Miss Jane Marsh.

Gorostiza was not popular in Mexico because of a literary disease, called Romanticism, which spread over the nation during his lifetime and which produced there, as it did in the rest of the world, a new sort of drama.

To tell what Romanticism is would take many pages. It is much easier to explain what it is not. It is not Classicism. Anything classical was abhorred by the independent Romanticists. Classicists insist on the unities: Romanticists blithely leap over a score of years in their plays whose blood-thirsty plots are usually set in the early years of their country's history and are full of revenge and curses and mysterious heroes amid settings of wild nature.

Romantic drama began in Mexico with Muñoz, *visitador de México*, produced in 1838 by Ignacio Rodríguez Galván (1816-1842), nephew of a Mexico City bookseller. When batches of plays by Madrid's Romanticists crossed the Atlantic after 1834, the young clerk read them and convinced himself that he could write something just as good. For his first attempt, he set his scene in the time of Philip II and wrote about an inspector sent to investigate conditions in the colony. This inspector, Muñoz, made love to the wife of a Mexican, Sotelo. In revenge, the outraged husband instigated a rebellion. It was put down and he was executed. When Muñoz tried to persuade Celestina to marry him by showing the lady her husband's corpse, the widow died, too.

Rodríguez wrote a second play which earned for him an appointment to a diplomatic post in South America, but he died during the voyage.

Another writer, exemplifying the exotic side of Romanticism, as Rodríguez Galván typified the historical side, was the lawyer and soldier Fernando Calderón y Beltrán.

Among his plays was a tragedy about Henry VIII, called *Ana Bolena*. Yet, despite these and other writers, not till the late 70's did the modern Mexican theatre get started.

The title of "Restorer of the Mexican Theatre" is generally bestowed upon a native of Yucatán, José Peón y Contreras. As a medical student he reached the capital where he occupied his leisure hours writing complicated tragedies, most of them set in the colonial period and dealing with romantic suitors in long cloaks who uttered florid and high-flown phrases to love-lorn señoritas. Titles such as *Hasta el cielo* (*Till Death*), and *Luchas de honra y amor* (*Struggles of Honor and Love*) indicate the sort of play he turned out with such speed and in such abundance that there were not enough playhouses for them all, and some were never produced. Yet he became famous and gave his name to a number of theatres, including the biggest in the important city of Mérida, Yucatán.

Later in the century came the Gamboas: Federico, whose *Última campaña* (*Last Campaign*) (1894) introduced Naturalism to Mexican stages, and José Joaquín, who made his reputation with

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*Via crucis* (*The Way of the Cross*) (1925) and a dramatic fantasy in twelve scenes, *El Caballero, la muerte Y el diablo*, in 1931, the year of his death. Of the half dozen other comedies and dramas that came from the pen of José Gamboa, many were concerned with what seems to be a favorite theme for Mexican drama: adultery.

Originally, Mexican dramatists imitated Spain. When they turned to national themes, several theatrical schools may be distinguished. One grew up around the revolutionary movements. In July, 1910, Francisco Madero provided the spark which set off a forceful attempt to solve Mexico's four-fold problem of land, Indians, foreign exploiters, and the church in its relation to the government. As the years went by, the Revolution influenced every phase of Mexican life. Laborers found new hope; artists, musicians, and writers received new inspiration. Naturally drama felt its influence.

The drama of the revolution deserves a separate study. Salvador Quevedo y Zubiate produced two: *Huerta*, in 1916, about the military dictator whose actions caused the United States to send troops into Mexico, and *Doña Pía*, an attempt to present the case of the lower classes, but which was not very warmly received. Also contributing revolutionary dramas were two women, Elena Álvarez and Concha Michel.

Mauricio Magdaleno published three such plays in his *Teatro de la revolución*, in 1931, including *Zipata*, about the Indian leader who tried to seize farmlands for his followers, and *Pánuco 137*, dealing with a struggle for oil. Three other plays, rated high, come from the pen of Juan Bustillo Oro.

Another development of the Mexican stage was the tent shows, called *carpas*. Actors toured the provinces, setting up tents that housed stage and seats, where for as little as five cents the poorest peasant could glimpse the dazzle of a play world, with glorified vaudeville shows or musical plays from Spain, that lasted half an hour or more.

In addition to creating a theatre-going public, these barnstormers produced at least three of the leading comedians of the present Mexican stage: Medel, Cantinflas, and the late Don Catarino. How many revolutions have been averted because actors and audience blew off political steam in these tent shows will never be known.

All this is in the past. What has Mexico done to develop a present-day theatre?

Playwrights and government alike, see-

ing the low state of the theatre, have been campaigning to raise the intellectual level of the stage and give native Mexicans a chance to see their plays performed. Between 1923 and 1934, at least 134 original Mexican plays saw production, because of the efforts of the Union of Dramatic Authors including Monterde, Jiménez Rueda, and others. In 1926, María Ocampo, with six other dramatists, sponsored a series of a hundred performances in the Teatro Fábregas, named after a famous actress. Another year, the company of María Montoya and Fernando Soler presented 53 plays, many by Mexicans, either original or in translation.

In 1928 an Experimental theatre was started, to be taken up in 1932 by the Mexican Ministry of Education, but inexplicably, just as some of the world's best drama was being presented, the government gave up the project. However, it branched into other activities. In 1930 it sponsored a Teatro Popular Mexicano for plays of, for, and by the workers, with prizes offered for the best, and with companies organized to take them to different sections of the nation. Special portable theatres were evolved with revolving, three-division stages for quick changes. Artists like Diego Rivera and Carlos González provided scenery and decorations.

In 1936 a School of Dramatic Art was established with an experimental theatre under Fernando Warner. A stock company, underwritten by the government, started a season of Mexican drama under the now aging Montoya as leading lady. And still the government keeps its hands on the Mexican stage, sometimes, as in the Alvaro Obregón Civic Theatre, to underwrite building and equipment and let the company make its living by dividing the income from the ticket sale. Sometimes, for one reason or other, the same government acts as a damper, stopping the run of a successful play when the Mexican's habit of ad libbing gets the best of him and turns plays into too violent attacks on political figures.

One wonders what there was in the play *Educando a mamá* (*Bringing Up Mama*), by Bravo Reyes, to cause it to be closed after 108 performances. But that is the fate of the Mexican stage. In 1649 the author of the *Song of Glory* was tried by the Inquisition. In 1876 Alberto Bianchi was put in jail for a year because of his authorship of the popular *Martirios del pueblo*, and now Bravo Reyes, after triumphing with *Maldita revolución*, can't "Educate Mama" without government interference.

So goes the Mexican theatre, with its cycles of intense enthusiasm, and its long dull years. Now Mexicans are pessimistic about its future, but it has had bright spots. With its tent shows, its musical plays, and its extemporized plays after the Italian *commedia dell'arte* style, it has really achieved something. Optimists among Mexico's literary leaders hope that in the field of serious drama, Mexico, too, will eventually make a name for herself.

# Your Role Needs Action

by MIRIAM A. FRANKLIN

Director for the Division of Speech, Grove City College, Grove City, Pa.



Prof. Franklin

EVERY play has business planned for it by the author. Yes. But few have enough and many have almost none. Players and directors are expected to work out and insert their own. Business must be suitable for the age and disposition of the character, for the mood of the scene, and for the heightening effect it has on the atmosphere.

When a scene is highly exciting, little business is required, but in casual dialogue action should be inserted or the play will become talky. Dozens of simple actions may be used. Remember, it must be planned and practiced to keep the play moving and make it seem like life.

A boy or man might repair an auto part, toy with a newspaper or hat, eat an apple or banana, whittle, take his shoe off and fix his sock, work a crossword puzzle, or write a letter. Any of these can be done during dialogue if the business is appropriate. A girl or woman could sew, dust, or perhaps prepare vegetables if she is in her own home. She might arrange a bouquet, lay kindling for a fire, eat a piece of cake, trace lines on her dress, comb her hair, do her finger nails, or peck on a typewriter during dialogue.

The business must be planned to enhance the effectiveness of the play and should be blended in smoothly. It is not necessary that the play mention the business in order to use it. Try out different bits, decide upon one and use it. It is essential that you give it adequate rehearsal for three or four weeks, timing it with the lines so you need to give no thought at all to what you are doing and can center attention upon the interpretation of lines.

## EXERCISES

### Busman's Honeymoon\*

*The living room at Talboys. The scene is empty except for the hinder end of MR. PUFFETT, visible beneath the chimney drape. He is unsuccessfully endeavoring to get his sweep's brush up the chimney and encouraging himself with strange and muffled cries and snorts. He is clad in many sweaters and coats. He wears a bowler hat.*

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*Enter, from staircase L., BUNTER, carrying a tray, on which are the ruins of a substantial breakfast for two. He stands for a moment watching MR. PUFFETT with an expression of cold criticism. Eventually MR. PUFFETT, emerging from the chimney drape, begins to withdraw his apparatus, rod by rod.*

BUNTER: Are we making any progress, Mr. Puffett?

PUFFETT: All the trouble with this chimney, Mr. Bunter, is sut.

BUNTER: So we inferred. (*Sets tray down on table in window.*)

PUFFETT: That's what it is; corroded sut. If it wasn't for the sut, it'd draw beautiful; no chimney can't draw if it's full of corroded sut like this here chimney is; you can't ask it.

BUNTER: I don't ask it. I ask you to get it clear. We should be glad to know why Mr. Noakes couldn't have had the chimneys swept before we came.

PUFFETT (*With dark meaning*): Ah!

BUNTER: We gave him ample notice. To find the house upside down and the chimneys smoking like volcanoes is not an auspicious commencement to a honeymoon.

PUFFETT: Oh! It's a honeymoon, is it?

(MR. PUFFETT stands up and faces BUNTER.)

BUNTER: It is, Mr. Puffett. We were only married yesterday.

PUFFETT: 'Oo was married? (*Takes off his bowler, comes down to radio, and puts hat down carefully.*)

BUNTER: Lord Peter Wimsey and Lady Peter.

PUFFETT: Oh! Lord Peter Wimsey was married, was he? Now from your way of putting it, I thought you was the 'appy bridegroom!

BUNTER: I am wedded to my service, Mr. Puffett. And I may say it is highly disagreeable to the feelings of a gentleman's personal man when his gentleman is smoked out on his wedding night. I assure you, Mr. Puffett, there wasn't a place fit to sit down in.

PUFFETT: I believe you!

BUNTER: We were compelled to retire to bed.

PUFFETT: Ah, well, I've known worse things 'appen to 'oneymoon couples.

BUNTER (*With a touch of asperity*): Do you see any prospect of getting that chimney clear?

PUFFETT: Well, now, Mr. Bunter; I put it to you to just take a look at this here sut. (*Picks up a large lump from hearth.*) 'Ard as a crock, that sut is—corroded 'ard.

(*Enter MRS. RUDDLE with broom and duster.*)

BUNTER: But Mr. Noakes has been living here himself, hasn't he? Didn't he complain of the chimneys? (*Briskly.*) No use coming in here yet, Mrs. Ruddle.

MRS. RUDDLE: 'Mornin', Mr. Puffett. 'Ow's Jinny?

PUFFETT: Not so bad, considerin'. (*To BUNTER.*) Complain, Mr. Bunter? Complainin's one thing, sweepin's another! Complaints cost nothing. I don't suppose there's a man in Pagglesham wot's ever had his brushes up this chimney. Ain't that right, Mrs. Ruddle?

MRS. RUDDLE: That's right, Mr. Puffett. 'Ard the time, Mr. Noakes won't 'ave no fire. Jest sets over that nasty, stinkin' oil-stove.

BUNTER: Well, I wish someone could inform us where this gentleman's got to.

MRS. RUDDLE: I'm sure I can't tell you, Mr. Bunter, without he's over at Broxford. When I come up last Thursday morning to do for 'im same as usual and finds the 'ouse shut up, I says, "There! if he ain't gone over to Broxford without tellin' me." And 'im owin' me for the week, too, wot's more.

PUFFETT: You don't say, Mrs. Ruddle.

MRS. RUDDLE: And not the first time neither.

BUNTER: Does he often go over to Broxford?

PUFFETT (*Getting down on knees again*): Got his business there. Wireless.

MRS. RUDDLE: And 'e's got a bedroom over the shop. Often away nights, 'e is.

BUNTER: Does he never leave you the key when he goes?

MRS. RUDDLE: Not him. (*Sniffs.*) Afraid I'll pinch something, I suppose. Nobody can't get in, without they go over to Miss Twitterton's—that's 'is niece over at Pagford—and gets the other key from her—same as you did.

PUFFETT: Ah, 'e's a careful man is Mr. Noakes. Maybe 'e's got reason to be.

MRS. RUDDLE: And wot might you mean by that insinuo, Mr. Puffett?

PUFFETT: Nothing, ma. But 'e ain't never found that there note-case, did 'e?

MRS. RUDDLE: I'm sure it ain't nothin' to do with me if 'e did nor yet if 'e didn't.

PUFFETT (*To MRS. RUDDLE*): 'Oo said it was? All the same, that's when 'e 'ad the locks put on they windows. Ah, 'e's careful. And what you might call pre-cise.

BUNTER: Didn't he tell you that he'd sold the house, and that we should be coming down?

MRS. RUDDLE: Not a word, Mr. Bunter, 'e didn't. You could a-knocked me down with a feather when you came round last night. And the pore lady and gentleman on their 'oneymoon, too. It was a mercy I 'ad the clean sheets aired and ready. Such a nice young lady. And 'is lordship—such a lovely gentleman! They must have been rare put about. Never mind! We'll soon 'ave everything straight for the 'appy pair.

(*HARRIET passes window.*)

BUNTER: Here comes her ladyship. You'd better get on with the washing-up.

MRS. RUDDLE (*Taking up tray*): That's right. (*Peeping under the dish-covers.*) Taking their vittles well? Ah! bless their dear 'earts! I likes to see a young couple eat 'earty.

BUNTER: Oh! And the lamps, Mrs. Ruddle. They all need new wicks.

MRS. RUDDLE: 'E never uses 'em nowadays. Candles!

(*Exit MRS. RUDDLE.*)

BUNTER: So we discovered last night. Well, now, Mr. Puffett. That chimney's got to be cleared.

PUFFETT: I asks you, Mr. Bunter, is it fair to a man or his rods—?

(*Enter HARRIET from garden, with some bronze chrysanthemums. She does not appear to be unduly depressed by the events of the preceding night.*)

HARRIET: The garden's been quite well kept anyway—(*Sees MR. PUFFETT.*) Oh, Bunter! You've got hold of the sweep? How splendid!

BUNTER: Yes, my lady. I went out early and ascertained that Mr. Puffett would be willing to oblige.

(*MR. PUFFETT turns round and struggles up from his knees.*)

HARRIET: How very kind of you, Mr. Puffett. We had a dreadful time with it last night. (*She extends a friendly hand.*)

### Morning's At Seven\*\*

*The back porches of two houses can be seen. Esther and Cora, neighbor women, are exchanging confidences on Cora's back porch.*

CORA: That's right. How is David behaving?

ESTHER: Oh, I don't know, Cora. This last week I've hardly been out of the house.

CORA: I think it's a shame.

ESTHER: He made me promise I'd never come down again without his permission.

CORA: You didn't promise him—?

ESTHER: Well—I—I really had to. He said—(*She gives a nervous giggle.*) He said if I ever came down again I'd—I'd have to live on the second floor the rest of my life.

CORA: Live on the second floor?

ESTHER: Upstairs. And he'd live downstairs.

CORA: But that's silly, Esty. You couldn't live on the second floor.

ESTHER: I guess I'd have to. The house divided, you know.

CORA: How would you get your meals?

ESTHER: He says I can come down the back-stairs and use the kitchen when I want it.

CORA: If that isn't just like David! Why doesn't he live on the second floor?

ESTHER: He thought it would be easier for me on account of the bathroom.

CORA: Oh! Well, what would he do for a bathroom?

ESTHER: He'd have another put in. In that little closet off the kitchen.

CORA: But that would cost money, Esty!

ESTHER: I know it would. That's the one thing that worries me. Of course he'd only put in a seat and a basin. He says maybe I'd let him use the bath now and then.

CORA (Sharply): Well, I wouldn't!

ESTHER: Oh, I'd have to.—He says he'll put up a bell that will ring when he wants to use it. So we wouldn't bump into each other.

CORA: And you wouldn't see each other at all?

ESTHER: I guess not. He says if we're going to be independent we might as well be independent. Of course if we should meet in the hall we'd bow to each other, like two acquaintances.

CORA: Well, he's just trying to scare you, Esty. And I think you ought to take a stand against him! You ought to be able to come down here any time you want to. David's just jealous!

ESTHER: I know it, Cora. He gets more so all the time. If he'd only stop talking about his Crystal Fortress.

CORA: You know, Esty, I always thought that Crystal Fortress was rather a lovely idea.

ESTHER: You wouldn't if you'd lived in it fifty-five years.

CORA: No, I think it's lovely. Your friends or anybody can come up to the fortress and look in through the door—and you can see them and talk to them and everything—but no one can ever really come into it except just the two of you. Just you two all alone there by yourselves. It must be nice sometimes to be all alone with—the person you live with.

(CARL has entered from stage left. The lights have gone on in the house and he stops in the patch of light from the window. Puts foot on step, and then decides not to go in. Stands there.)

CORA (In a whisper): Dear, he looks kind of sad standing there, doesn't he?

ESTHER: Yes, he does.

CORA: He's afraid to go in.

ESTHER: I guess I'd better go over.

CORA: You're not scared, are you?

ESTHER: No, I guess not.

CORA: I'll be in the kitchen watching if you want me.

ESTHER: All right. (CORA exits into house right. ESTHER starts across to CARL. He is so absorbed staring at the house he doesn't hear ESTHER until she is on him.) Good evening, Carl.

(CARL turns on her quickly and stands staring at her. Pause.)

CARL: Oh!

ESTHER: It's Esty.

CARL: Oh, yes—

ESTHER: I'm sorry I startled you.

CARL (Confused): Well, that's—that's all right, Esty—I was just—standing here—. (He becomes self-conscious and ashamed and to cover it very jovial.) Well, well, how are you, Esty? How are you?

ESTHER: I'm all right, Carl.

CARL: Well, it's nice to see you. Haven't seen you for several days.

ESTHER: No, I've been pretty busy with my garden.

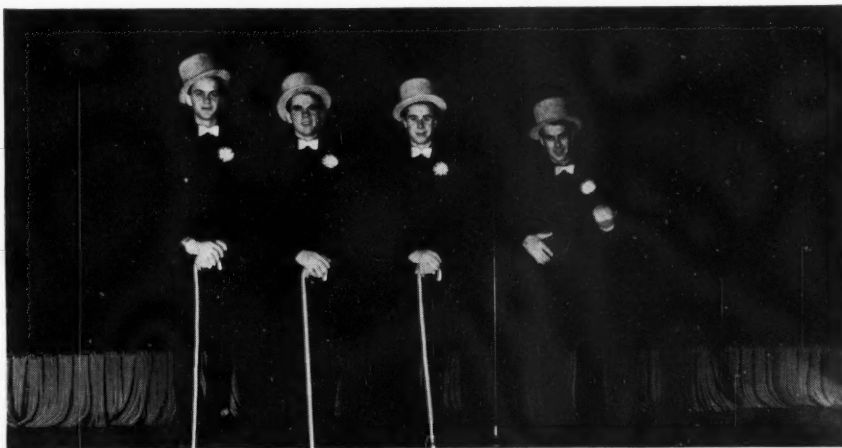
CARL (Pulling chair up by porch steps): Well, come and sit down. How's David?

ESTHER (She sits—CARL sits by her on steps): David's fine.

CARL: Glad to hear it! Glad to hear it! Wonderful man, David. Wonderful man.

ESTHER: Yes, there're some fine things about David.

CARL: Fine things? No! He's a wonderful man, Esty!



The song team used by Mr. Wood as the "next-to-closing" feature of his vaudeville show, "Penny Parade."

## Penny Parade

by DONALD WOOD

Thespian Troupe Sponsor, Hibbing High School, Hibbing, Minn.

WHILE professional vaudeville is no longer in demand in the commercial theaters, the amateur variety show is as popular as ever. Troupe 272 of Hibbing, Minn., recently proved its contention that a vaudeville show can be a well-knit program, satisfying entertainment, and a worthwhile project. At first glance, an amateur show of this type looks simple, but in reality it takes a good deal of work.

Troupe 272 decided to do a one-hour show for a free assembly program. Then, because the March of Dimes was making its annual appeal, it was agreed that the assembly show might be used as a way to get money for the local anti-infantile paralysis funds. So the show was labeled "Penny Parade," and, while there was no admission charged, all students were invited to contribute "a penny or so". These contributions totaled over forty-six dollars in pennies. The Thespian treasury stood all expense for the show; therefore, the entire student contribution was left untouched and went into the community fund intact.

The setting was quite an effective one. A set of green flats was set up, upside down, so that all doorways were upside down at the top of the set. These doorways were then given a balcony effect by placing a guard-rail, made of a few light boards and some curved wrought-iron bars (cut from cardboard and painted a blue-black) in each entrance. Around the top of the set was placed a valence of natural muslin from which were suspended swags at both sides of each balcony opening. These swags were lined with a bright red and fringed with the strands from ordinary mops. When the swags were draped with a good deal of the red showing, the result was interesting.

If you are planning a variety show, get a catalog from Lester, Ltd., 14 W. Lake Street, Chicago, Illinois. This company has a wealth of theatrical equipment for sale.

No ceiling was used, but the set was surrounded by a dark velour cyclorama. The cyclorama was not lowered to the floor, but was dropped just far enough so as to serve as backing for the fake balconies. This left dark, unlighted cyc stretching high above the set, making the set look as though it were a bright spot set into a more sombre background. Deep amber lights were used behind each of the balcony openings. General lighting on the setting itself varied with each act.

The show started with a popular school dance orchestra playing several numbers. The orchestra, which is of professional calibre although made up of students, was arranged on several tiered platforms.

Act Two was a tap dance on the apron of the stage. This act was followed about the stage by a spot-light in the booth.

Other numbers on the bill were an accordion solo, an acrobatic waltz, and a trumpet imitation of Henry Busse's "Hot Lips". A girls' trio, dressed in identical gowns made of inexpensive white net, sang three "pop" selections. The net dresses were brightened up with the use of sparkling, silver stars which were purchased from the Lester Company in Chicago.

Next came a short comic sketch lasting less than ten minutes. Its broad and rapid playing was approved by the audience.

A high school girl was next presented in several popular novelty numbers. She was dressed in a black evening gown, wore a page-boy, platinum blonde wig, and carried a huge chiffon handkerchief. Her singing itself was good, and the make-up and the costuming added even more to her act.

A professional puppeteer, Mr. Arne Nybak, from the famous Duluth Children's Theatre, presented several clever hand puppets in varied dances. A pair of ballroom dancers were so life-like in their



The ark scene from *The Piper*. The devil is seen poking souls into the fire. The animal masks are those described by Dr. Becky.

## We Make Our Own Animal Masks!

by DR. RUTH E. BECKEY

Department of Speech, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio

MANY play producers like to produce plays which present problems in stage scenery, costumes, or acting for their classes in dramatics. To be truly educational, courses in dramatics should furnish opportunities for the student to learn about all phases of the production of a play. Such opportunities were furnished to one group of drama students at Kearney, Nebraska, when they decided to produce *The Piper*, by Josephine Preston Peabody.

One day in class, a student asked, "How are we going to make the animal heads for the strolling players in the ark?" That was a minor detail, but an important one, to help create atmosphere for the play. The students became quite eager when told that they could make them in their dramatics class. They brought old newspapers, string and wrapping paper. The materials for the papier-mâché included wallpaper paste and kleenex. The masks were easily made during three two-hour periods. They decided to make a lion, bear, fox, and a monkey.

movements that they brought down the house. These puppet numbers were performed to the accompaniment of recorded music which was played behind a set of large screens. These screens were built by Thespians, and served to mask Mr. Nybak and the sound machine operator.

For "next-to-closing," four Thespian boys had obtained a popular Ink Spot recording and memorized all the words exactly. Then while the boys supposedly sang the song (and even faked an accompaniment on a guitar), the real recording was being played backstage. The boys wore dark suits, shirts, and shoes. Their top hats, ties, boutonnieres, and gloves had been purchased from the Lester Company and were treated with orange "Lesterlite," a paint that glows under ultra-

### Making the foundation

The foundation for the mask was made on the first day. Each person wrapped his newspapers, sheet by sheet, making a ball about the size and shape of the head he wished to make. After he had succeeded in obtaining the size he wished, he tied the ball securely so that the ball of paper would hold its form. The students were puzzled. How could an animal mask be made from a ball of paper?

### Making the papier-mâché

The next step was making the papier-mâché. Wallpaper paste was used as it could be mixed so easily with cold water. After obtaining a thick paste, pieces of kleenex were torn into tiny pieces and soaked in water (warm water disintegrates the paper faster). While the paper was in the water, someone worked with it, constantly pulling and tearing it apart in order to pulverize it as well as possible. Then the water was squeezed from the paper and the finely torn wet paper was mixed with the paste. The mixture was

violet (black) light. A small quantity of this paint was purchased and the three canes were given a coating. Lighting equipment was also purchased to produce the "glow". During the song all white lights were doused and in the remaining black light, the specially treated hats, gloves, ties, boutonnieres, and canes glowed warmly while everything else was in absolute darkness. The photograph of the four boys was taken in ordinary light and, therefore, their faces show, but under the ultra-violet light, even their faces became invisible. The black-light theme is an old one on the professional stage, but it is seen so seldom in amateur productions, that it is a genuine show-stopper.

The show closed with another short, fast session with the orchestra.

worked until it was smooth and easy to form into shapes.

### Making the features

The student then wet the top of his paper ball, put strips of wet newspaper on it so that the ball could more easily be taken away from the form later. After this was done, he formed the features of the animal. He was aided in this by looking at animal pictures with good profile and front views. Even students with no experience in art were able to do quite well. Small amounts of the papier-mâché were applied until the entire surface of the face was covered with a layer and then the features were built up on this. If the nose was prominent, a great deal of papier-mâché was needed. When a fairly good likeness of the animal was secured, the student placed the form where it would dry most quickly.

### Making the mask

In about forty-eight hours the foundation was dry enough to make the mask. On this form cold cream was rubbed. Any kind of grease will do. A piece of gauze and grease made the mask easier to remove from the form when it was dry. The gauze also added strength to the mask. Now, the student tore his wrapping paper into narrow strips. Torn paper will apply more smoothly than paper which is cut. These torn strips were slipped through a pan of cold-water paste and applied diagonally across the face of the form. After an entire layer of strips had been made, the next layer was placed in the opposite direction. This process was repeated until at least three or four layers were made. Of course, each layer made the mask stronger. The form and mask were then placed where they would dry quickly.

### Painting the mask

By the next class period, the mask was dry and hard. The newspaper core was removed. With care the core can be removed so that it may be used again and again. Now, the interesting process came. Pictures were used to help guide the student in his painting of the mask. If the foundation coat of muresco paint had been applied on the previous day, real painting could now be done. The most dominant color in the animal's face was chosen for the background color. Both stage water color paints and show card colors were used. After the ground color was dried sufficiently, the features were painted . . . such as the nose, ears, and eyes. Highlights, which were the lighter colors, made certain parts of the face to show up. For instance, white was used around the edges of the ear in the dark monkey to enable the audience to see the ear. White around the eyeball made the eyes more vivid too. To give more depth to the eye, some shadow was added above the eye.

One of the many details in the production of *The Piper* was finished. The masks were ready to do their part on the stage.

# Voice and Diction

by KATHARINE A. OMMANNEY

Director of Dramatics, North High School, Denver, Colorado

THE most controversial phase of our course is the question of what constitutes a pleasing voice and correct diction, for they depend largely upon local cultural attitudes. However, we have a distinct responsibility to our students to improve their speech, and how far each of us cares to go in setting up professional stage standards is an individual problem we must each decide in accordance with the immediate situation. Like the technical work in pantomime, simple exercises can be started at the beginning of the course and carried on throughout the semester or year or intensive training can be given for about two weeks.

Since our subject deals largely with effective stage presentation, our emphasis should center on fundamentals while specialized voice work can be relegated to the speech classes which all dramatic students should be urged to take. It is our business to see that our young people speak more clearly, correctly and pleasingly at the end of the course than at the beginning and the simpler we can make the classwork the better results shall we get.

Again relaxation is the primary necessity as most unpleasant voices are due to constriction somewhere in the vocal apparatus. Therefore, before all vocal practice, we should get them to relax completely especially in the facial and throat muscles, for a relaxed throat and jaw and flexible lips are essential in pleasing speech. Help them to get the feel of an open throat by yawning and of a relaxed jaw by dropping it at least three quarters of an inch.

The next step is the correct formation of the vowel sounds upon which beauty of tone largely depends. If you have not studied phonetics, you can refer to any good textbook or to the introduction of the best dictionaries to understand the positions of the tongue and lips for the front, mixed and back vowels and diphthongs. Striving solely for purity of tone and not for volume, have them form each sound with the correct position of the lips and tongue, keeping a relaxed jaw and throat.

Deep central breathing which is rhythmic and controlled in the speech process is the next essential. Try to inspire them to breathe deeply at least ten times every morning and night, expanding the lower rib region, and encourage them to walk briskly out of doors breathing deeply and counting the steps while they inhale, hold and exhale until deep rhythmical breathing becomes automatic. Then have them connect speech and breathing by having them inhale, relax the throat and jaw and count on the exhaled breath, pronouncing the numbers carefully. You can then

go on to chanting short lines while they increase the volume of their tones, keeping an open relaxed throat. Speaking conversational sentences with natural inflections can follow based upon deep breathing and open tones.

Resonance can be your next objective. Using humming as the basis with the "m", "n", and "ng" sounds and words like "sing" and "ring," have them project the tones through the nasal passages. In exercising, deep breathing, and the relaxed throat should be remembered.

Articulation of the consonant sounds can then be taken up. Show them how the lips and tongue form most of these sounds, especially the difficult ones which they usually drop at the end of words, like "pt", "st", "z", "n", and "ng". Have them practice trilling the tip of the tongue until they realize it can be an active agent in clarity of sounds. They adore saying tongue-twisters and here is the proper place to let them bring in or make up the most difficult ones possible, and let them say them alone and in the group as fast as they can but insist upon absolute accuracy of the consonant sounds. You then can take up poetic passages from such poets as Tennyson, Poe, and Vachel Lindsay who stress the choice of words in relation to both sound and meaning.

How to use the voice effectively in interpreting the printed page is the last step. As in the work with pantomime, we must stress the fact that the thought is the thing and that our study of how to share it with others forms the technique of vocal interpretation, but that the technique is always merely a means toward the end of presenting the author's ideas to our audience. Many speech teachers define the characteristics of the voice as quality, pitch, rate and force and use them as a convenient foundation for the discussion of how to read the printed page or present our own ideas orally. Since monotony is perhaps our students' most serious difficulty, encouraging variety in the use of these four phases of speech is our next job.

By quality we mean the tone or timbre of the voice and the seven qualities can be explained to stimulate a varied approach to different types of selections. The oral is the light, delicate touch appropriate for lyric poetry and love scenes; the orotund is the round full tone we want the students to cultivate for all their speech work; the pectoral is the hollow tone used for ghosts

and in fearsome scenes; the aspirate or whisper is not often used but is effective at times; the guttural is very hard to use without rasping the throat but it is valuable for irritated, unpleasant characters; the nasal is only appropriate for dialect selections or in characterizing nervous, high strung types of people; the normal is the natural voice caused by the inherited vocal apparatus and its use which sets every individual's voice apart from every one else's. These qualities can be assumed easily. The always popular exercise of saying one phrase like "Oh, yes" exemplifying many emotions can help them definitely to change the quality to suit the feeling.

Pitch is inflection of lowering and raising the level of the voice. It is harder to get variety in pitch or modulation than any other vocal characteristic, for it is largely a matter of imaginative and intellectual response to ideas. However, we can have them tell the tale of the *Three Bears* exaggerating the change in the pitch of the papa, mama, and baby bears, or tell stories with the alphabet changing the pitch rather than quality to make the stories serious, comic or mysterious.

The fundamental principles of emphasis and subordination are more a matter of pitch than anything else; we should try to get them to lift the important words in pitch and lower the subordinate ones, before we take up the use of force and rate in the same connection.

Force or volume or stress must be handled carefully to avoid straining the voices of our students. It should come from the pressure of the diaphragm in explosive or expulsive breathing without any tightening of the throat and with an open mouth and carefully placed tongue and lips. It is true that speaking louder does give emphasis but mere shouting is not a successful means of presenting ideas. Sound and fury signify nothing unless they are modified in connection with variety in pitch, quality, and rate.

Rate is most important in the intellectual rendition of lines. Important words and passages are slowed up, unimportant ones speeded. Climax is quite as much a matter of increasing the speed of utterance as of using greater volume. Phrasing and pausing are a part of rate and we should train our students to divide sentences and passages into thought groups by short or long pauses according to their importance. They must learn how to breathe in the logical divisions of thought rather than when out of breath. The dead silence of the dramatic pause gives the opportunity for thinking and feeling on the part of both, speaker and audience, and its use is a phase of rate.

It is the varied use of these vocal characteristics that makes for interesting interpretation of lines and we can help our young people to employ them consciously as they learn to point lines to get laughs, as they build to the climax of a selection, and as they play scenes at different tempos.

This is the fourth in a series of seven articles by Miss Ommanney on "How to Teach High School Dramatics."—Editor.

Diction is careful enunciation and articulation of sounds resulting in correct pronunciation of words combined in pleasingly modulated speech characterized by good usage and wide vocabulary. Our work is mainly with the pronunciation and modulation but we can encourage our pupils to keep a vocabulary notebook.

In the province of careful diction we can rush in where angels would fear to tread and denounce colloquialisms and provincialisms or we can tactfully point out the dictionary sounds of words and try by our own speech to exemplify the best standard American speech. I think we should take up British stage diction for the benefit of any students who may want to go on the stage and to help them all understand the infrequent road companies they may have the chance to see, but I do not think we should encourage them to adopt it except in unusual cases. We can explain that the world over the finest English speech can be understood by educated people while the colloquial speech of the uneducated masses becomes more and more unintelligible as it sinks to the level of dialects. Nowadays we have the radio and talking pictures to help us lift local standards of speech and overcome the apathy or real antagonism of earlier years. It depends entirely upon our personal temerity and convictions how far we want to go to establish standard speech in our classrooms and public performances.

However, I see no reason why we can't insist upon the correct formation of sounds and pronunciation of words as set forth in the best dictionaries. I certainly feel strongly that our students should use the vowels correctly, especially the short Italian "ä" as in "ask;" the long "ü" as in "tune;" the circumflex sound in "girl," "curve," "perfect," "world" and "martyr;" the broad "a" as in "audience;" the long ö as in "roof," and short "ö" as in "dog." They should learn to distinguish between the short "i" and short "ë," the short "ä" and the Italian "ä," and the short and long "e." They can certainly learn to sound the final consonants and to pronounce the complete word in all its sounded syllables. We can drill on difficult words, pointing out where the accent comes and how to syllabize them. We can show them what we mean by slovenly speech, which is what most of them speak, and in all plays and reading before the class insist on their using the accepted pronunciation of disputed words, but we do not need to go into the intricacies of types of English speech, both American and British, and we need not stir up provincial fireworks over the silent or sounded "r"!

Next to doing nothing to improve their speech habits, our gravest danger lies in getting the conscientious students so keen that they become artificial, pedantic, and affected in their effort to be correct. As in all our work we should strive for natural, easy, flowing response and not for exaggerated preciseness.

# Euripides, a Modern Dramatist

By FRED C. BLANCHARD

Director of Dramatics, Woodrow Wilson Junior College, Chicago, Ill.

OF the three great Greek playwrights, Euripides is the one whose works are most likely to be seen in modern productions. And of the three, his plays are most likely to be read by young Thespians of 1942. For although he lived and wrote more than twenty centuries ago, his spirit remains "modern" and youthful. During times of war, the course of drama is hard to predict, but when peace comes again, the plays of Euripides are certain to return to the boards for occasional productions. And at this moment there is much in Euripides from which we might well profit.

Euripides was born in 480 B. C., on the exact day, according to popular legend, of the victory at Salamis. You may remember that Aeschylus was said to have distinguished himself as a soldier in the battle, and that Sophocles was one of the chorus of youths who danced in celebration of the victory. The date of Salamis, then, is a convenient one to recall in placing the three great tragic writers of Athens in theatrical history. His family seems to have been less distinguished than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. His comparatively humble station was a source of satire against him in later days, the allegation that his mother had been a herb seller being frequent. However, his father, Mnesarchus, was able to give him the usual well-rounded education of the Greek youth.

Just how he prepared himself for the art of playwriting we do not know. It is believed that he first intended to become a professional athlete. As a young man, he spent two years in active military service, and it may be that he served as a soldier on later occasions as well. He also became interested in painting. But when he was twenty-five years old, he made his first appearance as a dramatist. From that time till his death fifty years later, he was known as a writer of tragedy.

Of the actual events of Euripides' life we really know very little. Unlike many of his contemporaries in letters, he seems to have taken little active part in political life. Though in close contact with intellectual trends, he had little to do with practical matters. We thus have few records of his activities. He made many enemies by his unorthodox views, the most notable of them being the great comic writer, Aristophanes. There are many bitter jokes about him in the literature of his time, but these can hardly be accepted as fact. He was said to have shunned society, and to have had only a few close friends. There is even a tale that he spent much of his time in solitude in a cave near Salamis at the edge of the ocean, where he wrote many of his plays. Some evidence indicates that he

had an unhappy domestic life. At all events, he appears to have been a thinker rather than a man of action. He finally left Athens in 409 B. C., when he was about seventy years of age. Some believe that he was banished by his powerful enemies. It is certain that he was next heard of in Macedonia, having been invited to come to the court of King Archelaus. There he wrote his last three plays, and there he died about three years later. The traditional story informs us that he was attacked and killed by savage dogs, which jealous courtiers let loose upon him. Whatever the cause of his death, he died an exile, far from the Athens which he had criticized, honored and loved.

During his fifty years as a dramatist, he is said to have composed ninety-two plays; scholars are certain that he wrote at least seventy-five. Of these, we have full texts of eighteen, a considerably greater body of material than that left by the other two great writers. He was certainly well-known in his own time—the frequent references to him by satirists is proof of that—but he was not popular. He did not win a first prize in a festival until he was thirty-seven, and in his long career he gained the coveted honor only five times. It was not until after his death that he was done full honor. But in the generations following his own, his works were produced many times and were quoted much more frequently than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. The new world was more willing to accept him than the old.

In the actual mechanics of playwriting, Euripides was no innovator. Indeed, fitting new ideas into the old forms was one of his difficulties, one which some critics think he did not solve. He made great use of the prologue and epilogue, especially the former. The appearance of the *deus ex machina* in many of his plays has caused much discussion. Some think that this is an awkward device to extricate characters from situations which could not be resolved in any other way; but in some plays it can be well maintained that the *deus ex machina* brings about a logical conclusion. It was certainly a method sanctioned by theatrical convention. The choral odes, usually of high poetic quality, were at times not closely related to the stories. His complex melodramatic plots, frequent happy endings, realistic approach and humanizing of characters showed tendencies which were developed in the later New Comedy.

Like us, Euripides lived in a period of change, of turmoil, of war. Thoughtful men were asking many questions about formerly accepted ideas. Flaws were appearing in Greek institutions, or at the

least, Greeks were not living up to their noblest ideals. The old religion was being doubted, the ancient legends were being regarded with skepticism. There was a sharp difference between the idea of the democratic city state and the idea of empire. A strong war party arose; demagogues sought their own advantages at the expense of democracy. In such days, vigorous conflicts of opinion were inevitable, and Euripides did not seek to avoid them.

He attacked the evils which he saw growing in the state. His attitude toward democracy seems strangely modern. He believed deeply in the democratic ideal, but was not afraid to strike out against those who failed to live up to it. Euripides was a patriot; it was only against the forces which were leading to the decay and destruction of Athens that he fought. In early plays he approved of the wars in which Athens engaged. But later, as the spirit of the state became imperialistic, he deplored the growth of militarism. He was always deeply affected by the evils and horrors of war. His interest in the problems of women was modern, too. He even criticized the gods of tradition. "When gods are evil," he wrote, "they are no gods." Never complacent, always a rebel, Euripides loved Athens and all mankind enough to lash out against the powers of evil. It is no wonder that he made enemies; the wonder is that he escaped the hemlock cup of Socrates. Like many other prophets in philosophy and letters, it was left for the future to understand and praise him.

Now, as you know, the tragic Greek theatre traditionally treated only the stories of gods or godlike heroes of ancient times. How could Euripides write about the things in which he believed, when the form and subject matter of plays were already laid down? Dramas about contemporary people and problems would not be accepted. He adopted a method of special interest to us. He used the legendary stories indeed, but modernized them in thought and manner. His references to events of his day were perfectly clear, he expressed his ideas forcefully. But he kept within the bounds of theatrical tradition in order to gain a hearing. Even today, when we are accustomed to the realistic treatment of modern affairs, American playwrights have used a similar device. The dramatic treatment of social and political and social themes is often dismissed as mere "propaganda." To overcome this attitude, modern dramatists have written historical plays with obvious contemporary social applications. Maxwell Anderson's *The Masque of Kings* is about historical characters, but it is a condemnation of the selfish powers of government, applicable today. Other "historical" plays of Anderson include *Valley Forge*, which shows the faults and virtues of democracy, and *Knickerbocker Holiday*, which defends democracy as opposed to dictatorship. *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, by Sher-

The fifth article in Prof. Blanchard's series on "The Theatre of Ancient Greece and Rome" will appear in our March number.—*Editor.*

wood, and *Family Portrait*, by Lenore and William Cowan, are other examples of this "modern" technique which Euripides used successfully.

In this short article, it will be impossible to tell the stories of the eighteen plays of Euripides. However, a few comments about them may be helpful. One of them, *The Cyclops*, is the only example we have of a satyric drama. The story, taken from the *Odyssey*, is definitely comic. The drunken Silenus and the chorus of satyrs furnish much of the amusement.

*Medea* is Euripides' treatment of a popular classical story. Its theme has been the basis for many plays and stories, Maxwell Anderson's *The Wingless Victory* being the most recent. *Medea*, princess of the barbaric people of Colchis, has been brought back to Corinth by Jason as his slave-wife. Returned to civilization, Jason casts her aside and arranges to marry the daughter of the king of Corinth. In revenge, *Medea* causes the death of the king and his daughter, and kills her own children fathered by Jason.

*Hippolytus* is the story of Phaedra, wife of King Theseus of Athens, who falls in love with her stepson, Hippolytus. The conflict between her love and her faithfulness is pictured as a clash between gods who represent these qualities. It is a complicated but effective tale, the principal theme of which has been a favorite with authors of many periods.

*Hecuba* tells of the revenge of a captive Trojan woman against the king of Thrace. The daughter of *Hecuba* had been sacrificed by the Greeks, and the treachery of the Thracian king had caused the death of her son. In retaliation, the king's sons are killed, and he is blinded. The play is regarded as one of Euripides' finest, and is one of the best of his studies of feminine psychology. It is to be noted that many of the principal characters of his plays are women.

In *The Children of Hercules* and *Andromache*, Euripides endeavored to show the justice of the wars in which Athens was engaged. In *The Suppliants*, he pictures Athens as the defender of democracy and humanity.

*Ion* is a complex drama of intrigue. Although Apollo is one of the chief characters, he is human rather than divine. The mortal characters are more admirable than the gods. Some elements of the play illustrate the patriotism of Euripides. *Hercules Distracted* also derides some of the activities of the gods and praises Athens. *Helen* is a legendary story with a romantic and even light-hearted manner. *The Phoenician Women* is Euripides' ver-

sion of a part of the ancient story of the House of Thebes, especially the conflict between Polynices and Eteocles, with which we are already familiar through our study of other playwrights. *Alcestis* is the story of a young wife willing to die to save the life of her selfish husband. It is in a light and fantastic vein, and has a happy ending.

Several of Euripides' plays deal with phases of the legendary story of the family of Agamemnon, already used by Aeschylus and Sophocles. *Electra* tells of the revenge slaying of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus by *Electra* and *Orestes*, Agamemnon's children. Euripides adds complications to the plot, adds certain characters, makes Clytemnestra less of an utter villainess, does not condone the act of murder. In *Orestes*, the brother and sister are condemned to die, but are delivered by Apollo. *Iphigenia in Aulis* concerns the proposed sacrifice of *Iphigenia* by her father Agamemnon. The play was left unfinished by Euripides. An epilogue, of later authorship, tells how *Iphigenia* was saved by Artemis. *Iphigenia in Tauris* is concerned with the further adventures of the unhappy daughter of Agamemnon and of her brother *Orestes* and his friend *Pylades*. Their troubles are solved by the intervention of the goddess *Athena*.

*The Bacchae* is another late play which was not performed in Athens until after the death of the author. In it Euripides returns to a purely religious subject. *Dionysus* is the chief character, and *Dionysiac* worship is exemplified. It is perhaps the most difficult of all Euripides' plays for the modern reader.

*The Trojan Women*, left to the last, has always been one of Euripides' most popular plays. It has been re-translated and produced many times. It is simple, moving, pathetic. The Trojan War is viewed through the experience of three noble women of Troy—*Hecuba*, *Andromache* and *Cassandra*. The actual events of the play take place just after the capture of the city. Not the glory of war, but its effect on women and children is the main theme of the drama. Its final scenes are among the most stirring and tragic in all Greek dramatic poetry.

These, then, are the plays of Euripides which remain to us. Many of them will appeal to the youthful reader or spectator with special distinctness. The inquiring spirit of youth is likely to criticize existing institutions, to oppose convention, to rail at injustice, to rebel against selfish interests. Euripides did all of these. We might well remember, too, that he was the vigorous champion of democracy, an ideal for which men continue to struggle. He had two other great ideals—an immense sympathy for all mankind, and a profound sense of the dignity and worth of the individual. Thousands of years after the Golden Age of Greece, the fight which Euripides made for these ideals is not yet won. Yes, even in 1942, Euripides is very much a "modern" dramatist.

# The Technical Director's Page

by ARNOLD S. GILLETTE

Technical Director, University Theatre, State University  
of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

## Formalism

TUCKED away in the memory of every theatre-goer are the recollections of some production he has seen and which he sets aside as being head and shoulders above all others. Out of some two hundred plays seen within a year, many of which had found production on the most elaborate and best equipped stages of which Europe could boast, I was to find this "ideal play" being given in a building that didn't even profess to be a theatre and amid the most amazing assortment of difficulties that one could imagine.

Many directors and designers who are forced to work on stages that are poorly equipped or designed may study this production with profit, for the style of design used in creating the eight settings for this production would be adaptable to practically any type of structure that masquerades under the general name of stage. This style of design is called formalism and may be defined as a stage setting that is composed essentially of pure forms that create the playing spaces and are without any resemblance to natural objects and does not suggest a particular locale. This is the exact antithesis of the scene designer's usual approach to a realistic play where he does all within his power to create a convincing illusion.

There are several types of modern stages that have been more or less successful in accomplishing the true purpose of formalism. The outdoor stage with a natural backing of evergreens and shrubs has been accepted as an appropriate background for a variety of plays. Another type of setting with which most of us are familiar is the drapery setting which is simply intended to create a neutral background and which can be used for a variety of plays with very little change. A much more interesting type of formalism is what has become known as the space stage where considerable emphasis is placed upon the use of light and upon a stage stripped of practically all scenery but a few levels or ramps. The so-called architectural stage owes its origin to the old Greek Stage and has been acclaimed by many as most nearly reaching the goal of true formalism. Jacques Copeau's *Theatre du Vieux-Colombier* in Paris is invariably associated with any discussion of formalism. As a style in scenic design formalism has proved to be one of the most flexible and adaptable of mediums since it can be readily and tastefully combined with other styles.

The play I want to discuss is based upon a story that we've all known since we were children. It's *Tom Sawyer* as it was produced by the *Theatre for Young*

*Spectators* in Leningrad. Before I say anything about the production look over the design for the settings. You're probably thinking at this moment exactly the same thing that passed through my mind when I first saw this structure. I couldn't help but wonder what on earth could possibly be done with *Tom Sawyer* as a play against a background so meaningless.

The building that houses the *Theatre for Young Spectators* was designed and constructed as a concert hall and not as a theatre. The room that is now both auditorium and stage is large and almost square. The layout of the cement tiers of seats is semi-circular and not a great deal unlike the arrangement of seats found at the ends of a football stadium, and just about as comfortable. These seats occupy space along three walls of the room, leaving an open area on the floor level just in front of the fourth wall. In this fourth wall is the old concert stand, a small semi-circular stage approximately 10' deep. Its size, shape and lack of off-stage space precludes the possibility of using this shelf as a stage with the result that the settings are all designed to be placed out in front of the curtain in the orchestra area where they remain in full view of the audience. The only entrances into the hall are two large double doors on opposite sides of the auditorium near the proscenium wall that were used by both actors and audience. One would have considerable difficulty in finding a theatre less suited to handling a play of the magnitude of *Tom Sawyer* than the one just described. Yet, as I've said before, this production stands out above all others in my memory, principally because of the extreme cleverness of the designer, M. A. Grigoriev, and the equally brilliant direction of A. A. Briantzev.

*Tom Sawyer* was first produced by this organization back in 1924 and it remains one of the favorites on their repertoire. This *Theatre for Young Spectators* is really a children's theatre, but contrary to the usual practice in this country, we find that the only participation of children in a production is that of being the audience. The acting is done entirely by adults who are selected from the most talented actors in the U. S. S. R.

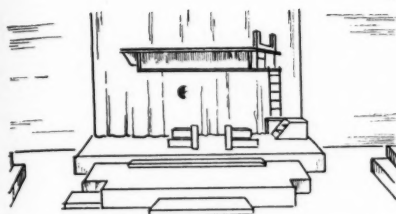
Our seats were almost center and high up on one of the tiers near the back of the house where we had a panoramic view of about six hundred youngsters seated below us and along both sides of the audi-

torium. Down in the central open space left by the tiers of seats and abutting what served as the proscenium wall was the meaningless arrangement of platforms and levels shown in sketch I. The original concert platform is masked from the audience by two sets of oyster-gray draw curtains placed one above the other. A small platform projected about three feet beyond the curtain and was some eight or nine feet above the stage floor. By drawing the curtains above this platform, which extended into the concert stage, an "inner above" acting platform was revealed. The "inner below" was brought into use by drawing the curtains hung from the under side of this projecting platform. The majority of the action took place on the "middle stage" and "forestage" formed by the two larger platforms resting on the floor of the auditorium. The similarity between this scheme of staging and the old Public Theatres of Elizabethan period becomes immediately apparent but here the resemblance stops for there was no suggestion of period of locale in the forms represented. Excepting the gray curtains and a few properties, everything used as scenery in this production was painted a flat uncompromising orange which, to say the least, made a dazzling bit of color against the cement gray walls of the auditorium.

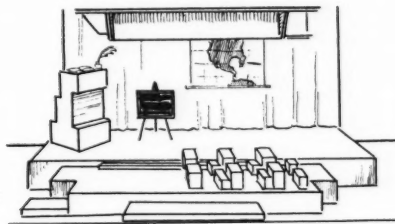
Capturing the attention of the noisy audience was simple and effective. The lights began to dim and with the dimming came the blaring of a band playing a very catchy march that made up in volume for its lack of quality. Out of the doorway through which we had entered the auditorium came a parade of the characters in the play. Tom, Becky, Huck, Injun Joe, and all of the rest of them, each lustily blowing or pounding on some musical instrument, marched in single-file around the platforms and disappeared through the doorway on the opposite side. As the last of them vanished the house lights were completely dimmed and almost immediately a single shaft of light picked up an area to the right of the middle stage platform. Into this pool of light walked Huck Finn, who began calling softly like a cat. The inner above curtains opened and a second light revealed two rectangular boxes on which Tom and Sid lie asleep. The cat calls finally arouses Tom, who creeps to the U-shaped form at the right of the platform to whisper with Huck.

It took the action of the play and the actors to bring meaning to those bright orange forms that had so perplexed us. The mere fact that Tom and Sid were asleep on two rectangular boxes changed them immediately in our imagination into beds while the entire inner above now became a bedroom. The U-shaped form was converted into a window when Tom crawled through it out onto the roof! The ladder became a tree as Tom climbed down it to the woodshed on which the ladder rested. It was no trick at all for our imagination to see in the two small upright posts on the middle stage the gate into Tom's front yard as he scurried across

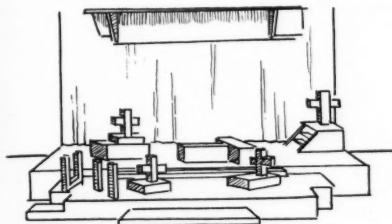
This is Professor Gillette's fourth article in a series devoted to "Present-day Trends in Scene Design."—Editor.



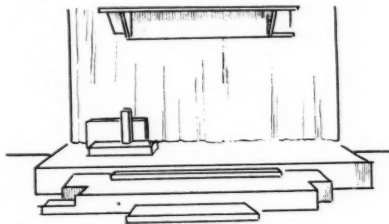
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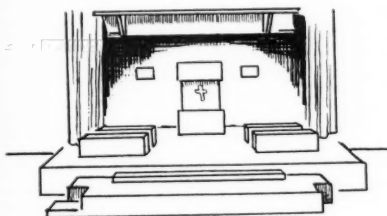
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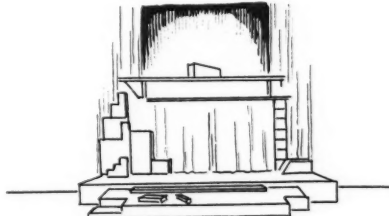
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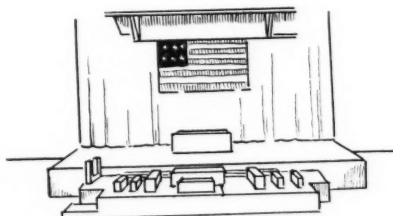
IV



V



VI



VII

from the shed to join Huck in the "street" just beyond it.

The scene shifts in full view of the audience were almost as delightful to watch as the scenes themselves. At the close of an act the auditorium lights would come up bright and accompanied by a recorded playing of the same theme song introduced by the parade a half dozen of the actors scampered about over the stage tossing and juggling the lighter forms between them as they rearranged the setting. There was no drop in the spirit of the play and no opportunity for the audience to become restless or lose interest, for these shifts were over almost before they began. The naive use made of these simple forms reminded one of the wonderful things a child's imagination can do with something like an abandoned washtub.

The second scene was the schoolroom with a roller map that pulled down from the under side of the projecting platform and a huge teacher's desk that was shoved out from behind the curtains of the inner

below. The graveyard in Scene III was characterized by the same simplicity and was but a rearrangement of the desks and seats used in the schoolroom. The scene proved most effective as it was lighted, for they had used blue-green mediums in the spots that bathed the stage from only one direction, which naturally made the tombstones cast unusually clear shadows.

Sketch IV represents the set as it was used when Tom, Huck and Sid were loading their raft in preparation of becoming pirates on the Mississippi. The stage is almost completely dark except for a pool of light that is focused on the small platform down stage center. The boys come out of the darkness of the inner-below carrying all their pilfered provisions. These they pile, with very convincing pantomime, on the supposedly easily swamped raft. It's finally loaded to their satisfaction and, with Sid perched on top of the pile of supplies and Tom and Huck poling, they set out. We expected them to close this scene with a black-out just as

the boys are ready to shove off but we were delighted to see that this small platform was on casters and that the two boys actually poled their raft around past the fore and middle stages and out the big double doors into darkness.

The church scene in Sketch V makes use of the inner-below for the first time. The schoolmaster's desk has become the pulpit and the beds used in Scene I are two of the pews. The other two pews were formed by combinations of the small boxes used for the seats and desks in the schoolroom.

A realistic treatment of the scenes just outside the cave and within it would tax the ability of any designer no matter what facilities were at his disposal. Yet see how simply and effectively it was solved by designer Grigoriev. We find the Sunday School class coming out of the side doorway to the picnic ground, which is the brightly lighted middle and forestage, just in front of the cave. Candles are given each child who steps into the cave by parting the inner-below curtains and slipping in out of sight. As the last of them disappear the lights on the fore stages are dimmed out and during this momentary black-out the upper curtains are opened. The picnic group appears on the upper level through a trap just behind the box and proceed to inspect the interior of the cave with no other light than that provided by their candles. Tom and Becky come to the edge of the platform and look down into the dark forestage area. They decide to explore this part of the cave and, unseen by the rest of the group, they clamber down the forms shown at the left of the sketch. They wander around this part of the cave and finally "get lost" by taking another passage, which was done by parting the curtains near the ladder and stepping out of sight. The rest of the party retrace their steps and emerge from the cave onto the forestage as the lights are gradually dimmed up to bright. The whole sequence of scenes laid within the various parts of the cave and on the picnic grounds just outside were treated with variations of the scheme just outlined.

Outside the American flag hanging on the backwall there was nothing to suggest a courtroom until the action of Scene VII unfolded. Here again was the epitome of simplicity in design as the sketch of this set will show.

Any written account of this production could not help but fail to capture the spirit of enthusiasm of its performance. One really needs to have been a member of the audience to appreciate these qualities and its effectiveness, but perhaps this article has shown to some degree the use and adaptability of formalism.

With the next article I plan to abandon the European theatre for the moment and discuss something a little closer to home. Can you imagine a single setting that could be adapted successfully to meet the requirements of over four hundred plays? This has been done by the aid of a unit set and modified formalism.

# Staging the High School Play

This department is designed to assist teachers in choosing, casting, and producing plays at the high school level. Suggestions as to plays which should be discussed next or how this department can be of greater assistance to teachers will be welcomed.

Edited by EARL W. BLANK

Thespian Senior Councilor and Director of Dramatics at Berea College, Berea, Ky.

## Kind Lady

by Corleene Shumate

As Produced at the Marquette Summer Theatre,  
Marquette, Michigan, and directed  
by Joe Calloway

*Kind Lady*, drama in 3 acts (plus a prologue and an epilogue), by Edward Chodorov. Adapted from a story by Hugh Walpole. 6 m., 8 w. \$25.00 royalty. Samuel French, 25 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y.

### Suitability

A PLAY dominated by the quiet heroism of a kind old lady against a background of horror, gloom and evil is sure to appeal to high school actors and audiences. Although Broadway material, its plot and characters are not beyond high school comprehension and portrayal. And any extra time invested in developing a satisfying characterization of the harassed heroine will be well repaid in the impressive stamp such a character will leave.

### Plot

*Kind Lady* is neither a slice of life, a psychological study, a mystery play, nor a melodrama, but it has elements of all four.

Mary Herries, a kind-hearted lady in her late fifties, lives alone with her maid, Rose, in Montague Square, London. One afternoon she invites into her living room a tramp who asks for a cup of tea. He tells her his name is Henry Abbott, and that he has a sick wife and child. She feeds him and becomes interested in his evident education and knowledge of pictures. After Abbott leaves, she is unable to find her jade cigarette case. A few weeks later it is decidedly disarming to have him return her cigarette case and attempt to sell her some of his own worthless paintings. It is even more alarming when his wife, who is waiting outside with her baby, collapses, and the doctor puts her to bed in Miss Herries' house instead of sending for an ambulance. Neither Miss Herries nor Rose recall the fact that it was the tramp, Henry Abbott, who went out to fetch the doctor; and almost before they realize it, Henry Abbott and his under-nourished wife and baby are installed in the third story.

Gradually Abbott's presence so permeates the house that first, the cook leaves, and then the faithful parlor-maid, Rose. A few days later Miss Herries finds her drawing room invaded by Henry Abbott's cousins from Australia and orders them from the house. Her gentle frailty is suddenly surrounded by Henry Abbott and his stalwart friends; she becomes their prisoner. Her acquaintances are told by

a well-mannered caretaker that Miss Herries has gone to the South Seas. Her valuable pictures are sold off, and the French art dealer to whom she is permitted to speak is convinced that her mind is wandering. A nondescript bank clerk holds the audience in terrifying suspense up to the final curtain. He finally believes the old lady's story and aids in her release.

### Casting

What sets the play off from the usual run of horror plays or melodramas is not only the clarity of character drawing, but also the method by which the story is told. Though the characters who invade the house are villains of the worst type, they are never brutal in language or even in manner; indeed, Abbott is a soft-spoken young man who has every appearance of being a gentleman, while the Australian, Mr. Edwards, is apparently the very symbol of rough kindness. It is this contrast of what the characters are and do with the way they do it that gives the play a peculiar power.

The strength of the play will depend on how well a Mary Herries has been selected. This character must be sensitive and emotional, yet intelligently restrained—a little, kind old lady. Rose should have a cockney accent and be able to do a crying scene effectively. She may be played young or old. Mr. Foster, the bank clerk, may be played as straight character or eccentrically with a small mustache and carrying an umbrella. Lucy Weston is middle-aged, kindly, intelligent, has poise—light as to mood. Phyllis Glenning and Peter Santard plus a few lines of Lucy's are practically the only light influences in the play. This should be remembered in

### Corleene Shumate

MISS SHUMATE is introduced to our readers for the first time. It is a pleasure to present her discussion of the fine play, *KIND LADY*.

Miss Shumate has made us feel the horror of the atmosphere of this play. I feel that her discussion will make many a director either read or re-read this excellent melodrama with a view to future staging.

Miss Shumate lives in Ramage, West Virginia. She has her Bachelor of Arts degree from Berea College where she was very active in *The Berea Players* and in *Alpha Psi Omega*, national honorary dramatic fraternity. She has been connected with the Summer Theatre in Marquette, Michigan, and this past summer was a student under Dr. M. Catharine Lyons, president of Maclean College in Chicago. At present, Miss Shumate is teaching English and speech and directing a dramatic club in the Scott High School, Madison, West Virginia.

the casting. It proved better in our case to cut part of Phyllis' and Peter's lines since the two characters add very little to the plot, particularly in Act I, Scene 2. Peter should be a typical American college-football type. Phyllis—a straight ingenue—young, beautiful, English girl, much in love with this (to her) quaint American. Ada must be played by a frail, delicate-looking person able to produce a wild, unearthly laugh. Mrs. Edwards is stout, slow of movement, nonchalant in manner—a hard, cheap voice. Aggie, a kleptomaniac child, is best played with a half-shuffling, half-skipping walk and an uncontrolled, nervous touching of objects. Rosenberg—best played with a French-Jewish accent and a clipped, stiff, polite manner. The Doctor's chief characteristic is that he is a fake. He should be strong enough to carry Ada.

Mary Herries, Phyllis, Lucy, and Mr. Foster should perhaps all be played with a slight British accent.

A careful casting of this play is important.

### Directing

One of the chief problems in directing this play is to prevent its being too heavy as to mood and too slow as to tempo. To avoid this, make Lucy, Peter, and Phyllis as light and gay as possible—cutting some of the extraneous scene two. Some chuckles can be achieved on the entrance of the Edwards family. Play up the pantomime of Aggie for a few laughs.

The scene in which the Edwards family gradually imprison Mary Herries can be especially horrifying if Miss Herries is center stage and her visitors move in on her in a silent circle, simultaneously and almost imperceptibly until she realizes her freedom is shut off. The symbolism of this slow, mass movement will doubly emphasize this scene.

Clear, clean-cut, character delineation should be remembered with each character fitting into a well-proportioned picture or plot.

### Rehearsals

Since the play which I worked in was given by a professional summer theatre group, our rehearsal schedule was limited to intensive rehearsals for one week. This play, I think, would need a longer rehearsal schedule than is used for the average play—at least six solid weeks.

### Stage Problems

This is a one-set play with several prop changes. The set shown on the next page, designed and executed by J. Richard Carroll of the technical staff of the Cleveland Play-House, has a more simple floor plan than that of Jo Mielziner in the play book. In this set the striped wallpaper effect, the paneling, the platform, and the windows were the chief concerns. Briefly, the set was made thus: first, of course, the separate flats were measured and made. The cubed three-fourth-inch strips used for the top of the paneling were allowed

to jut over three-fourths of an inch on the other edge to prevent cracks in joining and to make a stronger, better-fitting set. In several cases six-inch returns were used to give variety and interest to an otherwise straight floor plan and to prevent "Dutchman" stripping of cracks.

The flats were painted a coat of sizing after all facings and panelings were screwed on (the heavier boards) or nailed (the small strips of paneling). The flats making up the separate walls were then battened together with one-and-a-half inch screws. (This gives added strength to the set.) Next the paneled section was brushed by a sponge dipped in black water paint to give a wood effect. After this was allowed to dry, a thin coat of glue was applied to give a varnished effect. The paneling was then covered by heavy paper and a dark rose sprayed on in a \$5.00 garden spray. After drying, six-inch boards were placed at spaced intervals and a lighter rose paint was sprayed on. The set was nailed together at the two corners and held in place on the stage floor by two braces and by small blocks of wood nailed to the floor. This method of set bracing enabled us to get a larger, stronger set on a stage with little depth.

Our color scheme consisted chiefly of two shades of green, brown, and two shades of rose. Most of the green was in the furniture, pictures and drapes. A backing of faint blue (winter sky) was placed back of the two windows of scrim and black tape bought at J. C. Penny's. (See French windows in set picture.) The backing was lighted by blue spotlights.

Instead of a large stairway and landing, we used two steps and a small narrow platform which extended three feet on both sides back of the archway.

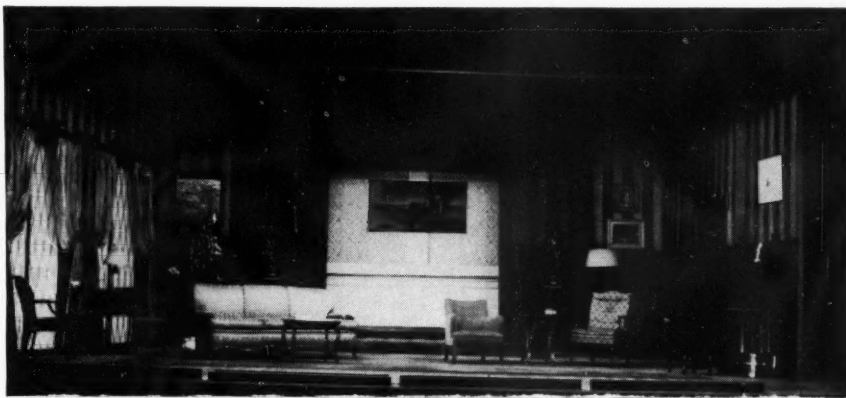
The between-act music may present a problem, but victrola records which can be faded and amplified will serve. A few unusual props such as a decorated Christmas tree and a portable victrola will be needed. Several good pictures and a statue of a woman are necessary. The statue can be made from papier-maché.

#### Costuming

The costuming is not difficult. The only costumes which might have to be rented are the evening gowns and capes worn by Mary Herries, Lucy, and Phyllis, two maid's uniforms, a nurse's uniform, and a cutaway coat. An easily-varied, detailed, harmonious costume plot as well as a complete list of props and stage manager's cues are included in the play book. As a result, I have omitted the usual costume plot.

#### Make-up

There are no special problems in make-up other than the quick change in Miss Herries which is made between the prologue and act one and act three and the epilogue. These changes in costume and make-up can be speeded up by having the costumes in order and a make-up kit open near the entrance.



Set for *Kind Lady* as designed and executed by J. Richard Carroll of the technical staff of the Cleveland Playhouse for the Marquette Summer Theatre, Marquette, Michigan.

#### Budget

The set, beginning from scratch, will cost about \$80.00. But if old flats are available the cost can be cut to a very small sum. The \$25.00 royalty charge per performance will be the largest cost item.

#### Publicity

We advertized by radio broadcasts written to emphasize the mystery and horror of the play and the fortitude of *Kind Lady*. We introduced members of the cast to the radio audience. A considerable number of pictured newspaper write-ups were also used.

#### Results

We played to full houses and received much favorable criticism. The play has many merits and little to criticize.

Nearly everyone has experienced the horror of feeling in sleep that something essential to his safety or position has suddenly failed. The officer dreams that his soldiers no longer obey, the teacher that his students rise in a horrible protesting mob, the businessman that the bank will not honor his check. *Kind Lady* is a drama of that sort.

In the March issue we stage for you that riotous comedy of home life and good sportsmanship, *The Three Cornered Moon*.

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# Motion Picture Appreciation

Edited by HAROLD TURNEY

Chairman, Department of Drama, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles, Calif.

## THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

A WARNER BROTHERS PICTURE

Adapted from the famous stage play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart

A NEW trend is on the way in the Warner Bros. studio in Hollywood, where the emphasis has usually been placed on action pictures, both outdoor and criminal, for the past three years. Stimulated by the success of *Sergeant York*, the company is swinging to real life stories. Ten different themes are now in preparation for early 1942 releases, each story receiving allocated budgets of over one million dollars. These include *Rhapsody in Blue*, George Gershwin's life; two stories by Belamy Partridge about his father and relatives, *Country Lawyer* and *The Big Family*; *My Life in Sing Sing*, on Warden Lewis Lawes; *Gentleman Jim*, based on James Corbett; *A Night at Tony Pastor's*; *Uncle Clem's Boy*, a story of Will Rogers' life; *Adventures of Mark Twain*; *Gibson Girl*, concerning the biography of Charles Dana Gibson; *Story of Boy Scouts of America*, dealing with the organization's founders; and *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, the life of George M. Cohan with James Cagney in the title role.

Certainly *The Man Who Came To Dinner* may be classed as another biographical film, for it has often been referred to as a take-off on Alexander Woollcott.

By this time you know the story—that of a distinguished lecturer and radio commentator whose lecture bureau schedules a dinner for him at the home of a society bore. To his great irritation, and eventually that of all concerned, he breaks his leg and is forced to stay on through the Christmas holidays. The high-handed way in which he takes over the household, relegating the family to an upstairs and generally spreading confusion in every direction as he plans for his national broadcast, provides the hilarious comedy.

The stage version opened in October of 1939, with Monty Woolley in the title role and continued until July 12, 1941, when Mr. Woolley retired to Hollywood to play the same part in the motion picture version. During the period three road companies toured the nation successfully: one through the central states, with Clifton Webb as "The Man," another in the South starring Taylor Holmes and a third along the Pacific Coast, with Mr. Woollcott playing himself. A fourth "amateur" company enjoyed a short run in the New England summer theatres, boasting as actors George S. Kaufman, Oscar Levant, Harpo Marx,

and Moss Hart. Of this production critics agreed that "ad-libbed wisecracks zinged past their ears like bullets from a machine gun." In Hollywood, summing up his contemporaries' performances in the role of Whiteside, Woolley observed that Woollcott was "no actor," Kaufman was "brusque," Clifton Webb, "waspy," and Taylor Holmes plain "miscalc."

Selection of the title role was the first problem that confronted Warner executives. At first a "picture name" was sought to re-create acid-tongued Sheridan Whiteside. Stars as different as Cary Grant and Laird Creagar and Groucho Marx were being mentioned. Finally it was decided to bring out Monty Woolley who had become so closely identified with his stage role that a new Whiteside was difficult to imagine.

Hollywood had met Mr. Woolley before. It knew him as a rather Edwardian-looking gentleman with his own beard, and Hollywood used him as numberless ambassadors, physicians, professors, French mayors, Grand Dukes.

It also used him as a kind of living sponge. His first picture was a little thing called *Live, Love and Learn*, in which, for all his bearded elegance, Mr. Woolley was required to stand under a water pipe for four days while his hat, coat, beard and other appurtenances were drenched, re-drenched and drenched again. His last picture before returning to make the hit of his career in the Kaufman-Hart play was *Dancing Co-Ed*, a chromo of college life in which he was dunked in a pool during a comedy sequence for two whole days. This first Hollywood-Woolley episode was extremely unhappy. One memory was especially rankling. It was the time when Director Mike Curtiz, of all people, said Monty didn't speak English "good enough" for a part in *Elizabeth and Essex*.

One night in 1939, Moss Hart long-distanced, "Monty, I want you to fly east right away."

"Why?" Monty sleepily asked.

"Because George and I have written a new comedy and we want you to star in it."

"Hang up," replied Woolley, "I'm just a tired old man who's trying to get some sleep."

Subsequently he starred in "it" 767

times—738 in New York City!

Actually Woolley got the role because Woollcott, for whom it was written, was detained in England and Adolphe backed out; Robert Morley, next choice, Menjou, but don't remind him of it now, turned it down. It was only when Hart told Kaufman that "Woolley might do" that he was chosen.

In his youth he was Edgar Montillion Woolley, born in New York City in 1888. He went to MacKenzie School at Dobbs Ferry and entered Yale with the class of 1911. His best chum was a lad who was preparing for the bar but seemed to have a distinct musical bent. During his college years he had already written one of Yale's classic songs, *Bulldog, Bulldog, Eli Yale*. His chum's name was Cole Porter and their friendship has spanned both careers.

Monty's chief interest was dramatics; he became one of the campus dramatic stars. The "ingenue" was a Philadelphia fellow, Bill Bullitt, our last Ambassador to France.

After Yale, Woolley entered the august halls of Harvard in search of a Ph. D. degree, but he soon returned to Yale where, made an assistant professor, he was given complete charge of extra-curricular dramatic activities, especially the Yale Dramatic Society.

In 1916 he enlisted in the army to hunt with General Pershing for Pancho Villa. He got as far as Tobyhanna, Pa., where he was cannoneer in the Field Artillery. When the U. S. entered World War I, he became a lieutenant in the Intelligence Division. Some good stories came out of that episode. One tells of the time Monty ordered ten two-ton tanks instead of two ten-tonners.

After the war he returned to Yale and his dramatic society. He numbered among his students young fellows named Stephen Vincent Benet, Thornton Wilder and Philip Barry, who later became famous writers, and Dwight Wiman, who is today a successful theatrical producer. During the following years he produced some notable plays which attracted important students in undergraduate circles. He might have continued, serene in his cultural hideaway, were it not for Edward Harkness, who in 1927 endowed Yale with \$1,000,000 for its drama school—the year spoken of by Yale alumni as the one "when Harkness covered the earth."

Those in charge argued that the endowment called for a director with a "name." Thus Woolley was demoted, making way for George Pierce Baker. Soon after, Woolley resigned and journeyed to Broadway and to his former student, Dwight Wiman, who gave him a job staging *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, *Champagne Sec* and the second *Little Show*. He also staged and acted in *On Your Toes*. Hollywood beckoned then and Woolley responded for the first time. During the second trip he appeared in *The Man Who Came To Dinner*.

Bette Davis was the second player to be selected. She was cast as Whiteside's secretary, Maggie Cutler. Miss Davis was

THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

anxious to do the role because it represented a "change of pace" between *The Little Foxes* and her current film, *In This Our Life*.

Ann Sheridan was a logical choice for the role of Lorraine Sheldon, the svelte, attractive actress rumored to satirize Gertrude Lawrence. During the photography on *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, Miss Sheridan also played in *Kings Row* as a 'teen-age hoyden of the 'nineties.

For the role of Banjo Eyes, a counterpart of Harpo Marx, whose antics contribute so generously to the comic goings-on in the little town of Mesalia, Ohio, Jimmy Durante was the unhesitating choice. As a result of the film, Mr. Durante was given a starring contract for further films at the Warner plant.

Reginald Gardiner was then cast as Beverly Carlton, British, playwright, wit, bon-vivant—a replica of Noel Coward. Mary Wickes, of the New York production, was called upon to play the much-insulted Nurse Preen. Billie Burke and Grant Mitchell were cast as the harried hosts of Sheridan Whiteside. Finally Richard Travis, a new player discovered by Bette Davis in a service short subject, *March On, Marines*, was assigned the juvenile role.

Only one mishap marred the picture's completion on schedule. Halfway through shooting a friend's Scotty bit Bette Davis severely on the face and a halt of two weeks was ordered. Miss Davis took the occasion to rush back to her New Hamp-



Monty Woolley, Bette Davis and Ann Sheridan in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

shire farm, Butternut, for a mid-picture rest.

Hollywood prop men are accustomed to many strange requests, but the properties called for in the film rank among the strangest. Four penguins who could march together in military formation, for exam-

ple. Then, too, they had to construct a portable water-tank, capable of bearing an octopus as a Christmas present. The octopus itself, a mechanical contrivance, was actually more demanding than any living creature. Craftsmen also constructed, exactly to Ann Sheridan's measurements,

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## THESPIAN HAS ROLE IN MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

The handsome Richard Travis whom you see in the role of Bert Jefferson in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is our own Billie Justice, a charter member of Thespian Troupe No. 149 of the Paragould, Ark., High School. Billie, at the time he became a Thespian, was under the supervision of Mrs. Marie Thost Pierce, now Sponsor of Troupe No. 301 at the Marked Tree, Ark., High School.

a replica of a mummy-case in which Miss Sheridan could be safely stored.

The most difficult set was a wintry exterior of a small Ohio town with snow and ice and a great spread of cold-looking streets and houses.

For his pattern, William McConnell, head of the scene-painting department, used the sketches by Robert Haas, art director, of the small city called Mesalia, by the authors of the play. With a crew of four expert scenic painters, he transferred the street scenes to a canvas cyclorama. Once this circle of painted houses and apartments was in place, the special effects men took over. The set was "snowed in" with salt and powdered gypsum. The "green gang" brought trees and shrubs from the studio green house and "planted them," in boxes, in their logical positions about the set. These were then "frosted" with paint, as were the windows of the house.

Property men swept paths in the studio snow, all of which had come out of the huge paper bags in which winter is stored on a movie lot. They swept them as well, but no better, than the average householder cleans his own walks. The whole premise of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is the assumption that the Stanley family, by its failure to clean the snow and ice thoroughly from their front steps, had contributed to the discomfort and injury of Sheridan Whiteside.

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## With the Radio Editor

A page published for teachers and students interested in radio activities at the high school level. Comments and suggestions from readers are welcomed.

Edited by G. HARRY WRIGHT

Department of Speech, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

### Radio Appreciation

*The Evening Hour.*

Columbia Network; Sunday, 9:00-10:00 pm EST.

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IT IS amazing how one's appreciation of a radio program is enhanced by attending an actual broadcast of the program, and seeing (and perchance participating in) the proceedings as well as hearing them. Last summer I happened to be wandering through the NBC studios at Radio City and suddenly found myself in a studio from which at that moment one of the better-known daytime serials was being broadcast. I did not then, and do not now like the program; yet when I hear it on the air, my memory invariably calls up the scene in the studio, and I listen for a while with a pleasure out of all proportion to my estimate of the program. On another occasion I walked in upon a rehearsal of the *Johnny Presents* program, and saw Johnny with his miniature red microphone. I have enjoyed the program ever since because I feel a sort of acquaintanceship with the little fellow with the bell-like voice. The studio audience idea is a good and sound one, regardless of all of the arguments against it.

For years I have enjoyed the Ford Sunday Evening Hour without thinking particularly of how it was staged. It was enough for me that the symphony orchestra was skillful and well conducted, that the music was selected with due regard both to quality and to understanding by a popular audience, that Mr. W. J. Cameron's talks were models of pleasing rhetoric (although I do not always agree with his thesis, and certainly am annoyed by his vocal quality and monotonous inflection), and that the chorus and guest artists consistently performed well, adding color and variety to the program. But listening to the *Evening Hour* was for me more than anything else a restful experience. Certainly it was not an exciting program, and if I missed it, I felt no particular regret.

But a short time ago, I had the good fortune to attend the *Evening Hour* broadcast, and my attitude toward it is changed. After being a part of the huge studio audience that witnessed the broadcast, after observing the drama and showmanship of the proceedings, I shall listen from now on as an actual participant, present, in my imagination, in the Masonic Temple in Detroit.

All visitors had to be inside the doors of the huge auditorium by 8:40. By 8:45 all 5000 of us were seated and ready to be given our instructions. As we came through the doors we had been given a

program together with a copy of the words and vocal score of the hymn which was to close the program. After we had been given general directions as to our behavior during the broadcast (keep down the coughing, applaud if you feel so inclined, but stop on signal, for the sake of split-second timing, etc.), the curtain rose as the symphony played a few bars of music. Then, under the direction of a competent conductor, we rehearsed the hymn, going over it about four times; and it was amazing to me how the singing of that vast assemblage improved in less than five minutes.

Then followed introduction of the performers. Risé Stevens, mezzo-soprano of Metropolitan Opera and Hollywood (*Chocolate Soldier*) was guest soloist, and guest conductor for the evening was the brilliant English maestro, Sir Thomas Beecham.

Without a word Sir Thomas raised his baton and literally hurled his musicians into *The Star Spangled Banner*. I have never seen an American conduct his own National Anthem with such fervor as this visitor from abroad exhibited. By the time we had finished singing the Anthem, it was a matter of second until time to go on the air. A hush fell over the audience and performers as the STAND BY light came on. Then, the ON THE AIR light, and the program was on.

The whole program was beautiful and inspiring—the conducting, the playing of the orchestra, the singing of Miss Stevens and the chorus. Mr. Cameron turned out to be a kind-faced, well-groomed old gentleman with a wealth of beautiful grey hair. He spoke to his visible audience as well as the air listeners, managing to keep excellent contact despite the handicap of the microphone.

When it came time for us to sing the hymn, we sang—full-heartedly and with a sense of keen enjoyment. Then the program closed, as always with the *Children's Prayer* from *Hansel and Gretel*. As soon as the ON THE AIR sign darkened, a tremendous burst of spontaneous applause came from the audience. It was a tribute to the excellence of the program and to the showmanship of those in charge. Everybody had had a very real emotional and aesthetic experience.

If you ever have an opportunity, join the studio audience at a broadcast. You will not only see and hear things that the air audience misses entirely, but you will set up memories which will enable you to get more out of that particular program in the future. I have always enjoyed the *Sunday Evening Hour* in a listless, irresponsible sort of way. But from now on, though my body may be in my own living room all the while, my mind will spend one happy hour each Sunday evening in the Masonic Temple in Detroit, where with thousands of others, I shall help Mr. Ford put on his show.

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Scene from *Berkeley Square* as given by the Heights Players (Troupe No. 410) at the Cleveland Heights, Ohio, High School. Directed by Dr. Dina Rees Evans.  
(This production was erroneously credited to another school in a previous issue. Our sincere apologies, Dr. Evans.)

## On the High School Stage

News about interesting and important events in the field of high school dramatics. Dramatics directors are urged to contribute brief articles concerning their major activities from month to month.

### Missouri Valley, Iowa

November 5th marked the opening of the present season of full-length plays at the Missouri Valley High School (Thespian Troupe No. 179), with the Junior Class production of *Poor Dear Edgar*. As their first production of the year Thespians gave *Through the Night* on December 17th. Members of the troupe, with Mr. D. A. Liercke as sponsor, promoted the formation of a Thespian troupe at the Logan, Iowa, High School, and assisted with the installation of the troupe. For their main project of the season Thespians are purchasing dimmers for the stage and building flats for the new stage. Mr. Liercke reports that after all equipment has been obtained, there will be two completely equipped stages and the dramatic

output will be doubled. A number of dramatic events are being sponsored by the dramatics department and Thespians each month. Two graduate Thespians, Gloria Satterlee and Patty Palmer, are assisting with the production of major plays this season.

### Burlington, Wash.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 333 at the Burlington High School opened their season on October 3 with the production of *Fresh Fields*, with Mr. John Lensrud directing. Among projects sponsored by the troupe this fall was the trip to Bellingham, Wash., where students witnessed a production by the drama department of the Western Washington College of Education.—Catherine Papick, Secretary.



Scene from the popular comedy, *Don't Take My Penny*, as staged by members of Thespian Troupe No. 427 at the Ambler, Pa., High School. Miss Helen Bork, director.

### Greenfield, Ohio

Major productions of this season at the Edward Lee McClain High School (Thespian Troupe No. 400) include two three-act plays and a program of five one-acts. *The Tin Hero* was given on December 9 under the joint sponsorship of the Speech Arts Club and the Junior Class. A program of five one-act plays will be given on February 17. The last major play of the year, *Give Me Credit*, is scheduled for March 17. The fall semester has also included the production of *Hansel and Gretel*, and several one-act plays. Another event for which plans are now being made is the McClain Modern Minstrel Show scheduled for April 1. A project that is attracting much attention is the large National Thespian emblem with electric lights as jewels constructed by troupe members. This lively organization is under the sponsorship of Mr. Wylie Fetherlin.

### Tulia, Texas

As their opening plays of the season members of Troupe No. 68 gave the one-acts *Parlor Tricks* and *The Flattering Word* as part of their activities for the fall semester. At the troupe meetings Thespians were required to present individual stunts and skits so that their abilities could be observed by the new sponsor, Miss Virginia Pitts. Thespians also offered a skit and a booth at the Halloween Carnival which is an annual event at this school.—Grace Bartlett, Secretary.

### Findlay, Ohio

The privilege of giving the first three-act play of the season at the Findlay High School (Thespian Troupe No. 451) went to the members of the Junior Class who gave *The Sunshine Twins* on November 28. Eleven members were added to the troupe late in October under the direction of Mr. Wilbur E. Hall, troupe sponsor. The troupe is holding its meetings regularly.—Betty Brooks, Secretary.

### Buhl, Idaho

Mrs. Rose J. Wilson has assumed the sponsorship of Thespian Troupe No. 394 at the Buhl High School. Troupe officers for this season are: James Joyce, president; Arlene Herzinger, vice-president; NaeDene Carlson, secretary; Dale Hobson, treasurer; Enid Almquist, program chairman; and Mary Jane Hawley, reporter. The troupe is meeting regularly and several plays are scheduled for production this season.—NaeDene Carlson, Secretary.

### Terre Haute, Ind.

*June Mad* was given on November 7 by the Garfield Players (Thespian Troupe No. 332) as the first long play of the year at the Garfield High School, with Miss Jewel Ferguson directing. A second major production of the fall semester was *Berkeley Square* given by Thespians, with Miss Ferguson directing. Thespians also gave two one-acts, *Dust of the Road* and *Gettysburg*. A major event of the spring semester will be the production of *Antigone* by members of the Thespian troupe.—Miriam Jenks, Secretary.

### Shenandoah, Iowa

The first full-length play of this season, *Stop Thief*, at the Shenandoah High School (Thespian Troupe No. 133) was given by the Junior Class on October 15, 16. The production was under the direction of Miss May Virden, troupe sponsor. Productions of one-act plays during the fall semester included *The Early Worm*, *Treasure Hunt*, and *Light Competition*, all given by the dramatics department.

### Champaign, Ill.

The Wig and Paint Dramatics Club at the Champaign Senior High School (Thespian Troupe No. 106) began its present season with two performances, November 14 and 15, of the three-act play, *The Devil's Eye*, with Miss Marion Stuart directing. The second major

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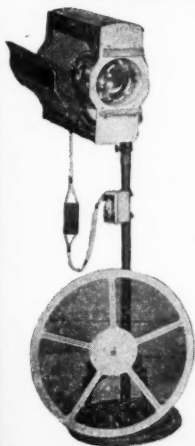
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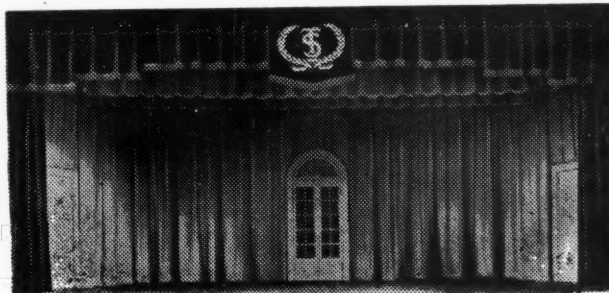
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play of the season, *The Curse of Solddoom*, an original play by Thespian Bob Piersol, was given on January 13 by members of the Thespian troupe. The fall semester has also included three one-act plays, special pep assembly stunts, an original broadcast of *The Life of Peter Zenger* at the University of Illinois, and a number of other weekly broadcasts. Daily broadcasts were given during National Education Week, November 9 through 15. A new activity added to the dramatics department this year is a program of intra-mural speech to develop greater interest in speech throughout the school.—*Bob Piersol, Secretary.*

#### New London, Wis.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 119 at the Washington High School sponsored a one-act play contest during the fall semester in which plays were entered by each of the classes in the school. All plays were directed by Thespians. The first long play of the season, *Elmer*, was given on December 11 under the direction of Miss Betty Klucinske, who assumed sponsorship of the troupe this fall.—*Hogan Mathewson, Secretary.*

#### Chester, Ill.

After several years of inactivity, Thespian Troupe No. 237 was re-established this fall at the Chester High School, with Miss Annette Krumsiek as sponsor. The first dramatic performance of the revived troupe and dramatics club was the one-act play, *By Special Request*, given on November 14. Several additional plays will be given before the present season comes to a close.—*Paul Hopkins, Secretary.*

#### Cripple Creek, Colo.

Members of Thespian Troupe 381 at the Cripple Creek High School are meeting regularly on the first and third Thursdays of each month, with meetings being devoted to the reading of one-act plays. Plans are now being made for the troupe's participation in the State

Drama Festival at Boulder, Colo., on March 13. Thespian Tom Vetter and Winone Swinney, now in college, have both appeared in college productions. Two major plays will have been given by the time the season comes to a close.—*Clara G. Hogg, Troupe Sponsor.*

#### Kingsport, Tenn.

The first play production of the season, *The Crumbs That Fall*, was given by members of Thespian Troupe No. 453 at the Kingsport High School early in October, with proceeds going to the British Relief Fund. The play was directed by Miss Nancy C. Wylie, troupe sponsor. A variety of other dramatics activities are underway this season.—*Lynnie Cox, Secretary.*

#### Cuba, Ill.

The three-act play, *You're Only Young Once*, was given on October 1 as the first play of the year for members of Thespian Troupe No. 441 at the Cuba High School. The second full-length production, *Man or Mouse*, was given by the Junior Class on November 14. Three days later the school Glee Clubs presented the operetta, *Yellow Lanterns*. Thespians are giving much of their time to rebuilding and repairing stage scenery. Miss Lorraine A. Anderson is troupe sponsor.—*Marjorie Price, Secretary.*

#### Fair Oaks, Calif.

Under the leadership of Miss Lillian Potter, a Stagecraft Club has been added to the dramatics department at the San Juan High School, taking the place of the stagecraft class. Miss Potter assumed the sponsorship of Thespian Troupe No. 289 with the opening of school in the fall. The first three-act play of the year, *Ever Since Eve*, was given by the Junior Class on December 12. A program of one-act plays was given late in October for the student body. Several other plays will be given during the spring semester.

#### Ravenswood, W. Va.

Thespians opened their season with a successful production of *Icebound* on October 24 at the Ravenswood High School (Troupe No. 253). The production was directed by Mrs. J. Wilbur Evans. Earlier in October a one-act play, *Who's Crazy Now*, was given as part of an assembly program. The play was directed by Thespian Jimmie Rowley. Improvement to the stage came this fall in the form of a new cyclorama.—*Peggy Riggs, Secretary.*

#### Laconia, N. H.

A unique event during the fall semester at the Laconia High School was the presentation of *The Nurnberg Stove* and *The Prince and the Pauper* by the Marionette Guild of New York City. The event was sponsored by members of Thespian Troupe No. 123 under the sponsorship of Miss Carolyn Dodge. Several Thespians appeared in the Senior Class play, *Almost Eighteen*, given on November 14. Plans have also been made for a one-act play contest, but no date has as yet been set for it.—*Geraldine Reidy, Secretary.*

#### Fort Stockton, Texas

An unusually successful production this season at the Fort Stockton High School was *Fireman, Save My Child*, given by Thespians on October 30, with the Fort Stockton Parent-Teachers Association sponsoring the production. Much credit for the play goes to Mrs. R. K. Blackshear, who assumed the sponsorship of the troupe in the fall.

#### Middletown, N. Y.

National Thespians opened their season of full-length plays on November 13, 14, with their production of *June Mad* at the Middletown High School, with Mr. Manuel Rosenblum directing. Two other major productions, *Three-Cornered Moon* and *For Her Child's Sake*, are tentatively scheduled for this spring. On Feb-

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February 13 Thespians will give an evening of one-act plays consisting of *The Valiant*, *Child Wonder*, and *The Florist Shop*. Several other one-acts have been given during the fall semester and Thespians gave the Christmas Assembly program on December 19. Troupe meetings are being devoted to a study of make-up. Thespians have added new equipment to the stage. Mr. Manuel Rosenblum joined the dramatic department this fall and is co-operating with Mr. Miles S. McLain as assistant troupe sponsor. Thespians attended the production of *Macbeth* on Broadway early in December.—*Ruth Finch, President.*

### Coffeyville, Kans.

Two performances of *The Mad Hatters* on October 28, 29, opened the 1941-42 season at the Field-Kindley Memorial High School (Thespian Troupe No. 317). The play was given by the Junior Class, with Miss Lydia Back directing. The Seniors have chosen *Through the Night* for their class play, which will be given

on March 3. *We Are Americans* and *The Obstinate Family* were among the one-act plays given by students of the drama and speech classes during the fall semester. Much interest in the troupe was created at the first meeting of the year, which brought together all alumni members. A dinner was given in honor of the alumni members present.—*Carolyn Morrison, Secretary.*

### Caldwell, Idaho

The Senior Class play, *Janey's One-Track Mind*, was given on December 5 as the first full-length play of the year at the Caldwell High School (Thespian Troupe No. 407). Miss Annabel Anderson, troupe sponsor, directed the production. For its first project of the year, the troupe sponsored a pay assembly consisting of musical numbers, reading, skits, and the one-act play, *Speaking to Father*, which proved highly popular with the students and which netted the troupe \$50, although admission was only 10 cents per person.—*Elaine Prince, Secretary.*

### Crossville, Tenn.

*Cyclone Sally* was given by members of Thespian Troupe No. 428 of the Cumberland County High School as their first play of the season, with Troupe Sponsor Ethel W. Walker directing. The fall semester has also included the production of various one-act plays. Several dramatic activities are being planned for this spring.—*Robbie Warner, Secretary.*

### Medicine Lake, Mont.

Twelve students made up the charter roll for Troupe No. 486 of the Medicine Lake High School, established early in November under the leadership of Mr. Maxwell Gates. They are: Gaylord Lansrud, Helen Lund, Eulice McKinny, James Michels, Erna Miller, Margaret Miller, Norma Olson, Clinton Olson, Marguerite Smith, Charles Winter, Chester Holje, and Bruce Johnson. The first production given after the establishment of the Troupe was an evening of one-act plays consisting of *In Doubt About Daisy*, *Sky Fodder*, and *Fifty-Fifty*. An attractive program added much interest to the performance.



Cast for the production of *Seven Sisters* at the Ord, Nebr., High School (Thespian Troupe No. 328.) Directed by Miss Wilma Frances Shavlik.

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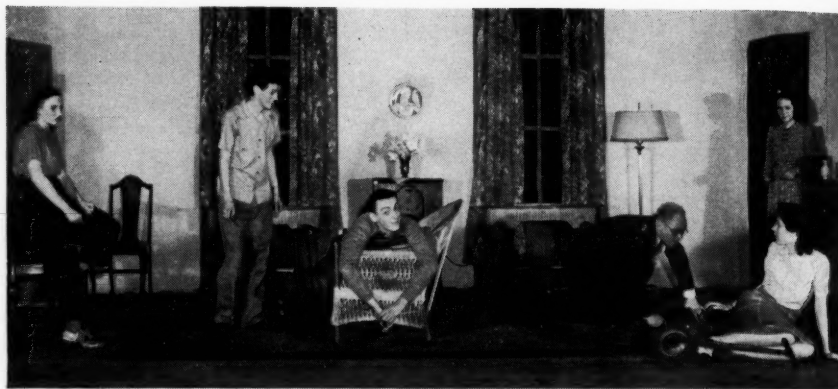
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### Centerville, Iowa

An impressive program of productions for the 1941-42 season got under way at the Centerville High School (Thespian Troupe No. 385) with the performance of *You Can't Take It With You* on October 23, 24. The play was sponsored by the Centerville Community Theatre. The Junior Class play, *Little Women*, followed on November 14. A third full-length play, *The Young in Heart*, was given in December by the Junior College Division. February will witness the production of *Peter Pan*, to be given as the Thespian All-School play. The Seniors will close the season in May with their production of *The Late Christopher Bean*. Among the one-acts scheduled for the year are *No, Not the Russians*, *Antic Spring*, *Highness*, and *A Wedding*. Plans are now being made for the Troupe's participation in the Iowa University Play Production Festival, the Drake University Play Festival, and the Centerville Junior College Play Festival. A number of students took the pledge of membership at a public Thespian initiation ceremony in November. All dramatics activities are under the capable leadership of Mr. Bernard D. Greeson and his assistant, Mr. John K. King.—Robert Harter, Secretary.

### Rock Springs, Wyo.

New impetus has been given to dramatics and Thespian activities at the Rock Springs High School this season under the leadership of Miss Martha L. Koons, new Troupe Sponsor. The season began with a successful production of *Seven Keys to Baldpate* on October 14. Thespians followed with *Yes and No* on December 9 as the second full-length play of the year. Other Thespian activities during the fall semester have included a safety program broadcast over a local radio station and a school assembly program. Several students were added to the troupe early in November.—Shirley Judd, Secretary.

### Vandalia, Ill.

Three long plays have been scheduled for production this season at the Vandalia High School (Thespian Troupe No. 245), with Mr. Earl F. Liddle in charge of all dramatics activities. *The Yankee King* was given by the Senior Class on November 6. *What a Life* and *Ever Since Eve* are the other two plays on the season's playbill. Thespians gave the one-acts, *Don't Feed the Animals* and *Minnie Fields*, as part of their activities for the fall semester.—Harriet Craycroft, Secretary.

### University, Ala.

Regional Director Florence Pass, founder and sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 258 at the Ensley High School, Birmingham, Alabama, presided as chairman of a very successful Speech Institute held at the University of Alabama on November 14, 15. Miss Pass served as President of the Alabama Speech Association during the past year.

### Fairmont, Minn.

The Dramatics Department of the Fairmont High School (Thespian Troupe No. 261) opened its 1941-42 season with the performance of *What a Life* on November 18, with Miss Caryl E. Meyer directing. Early in November members of the Troupe assisted with the staging, lighting and make-up for the grade school operetta, *Tom Sawyer*.—Lucille Westergard, Secretary.

### Cheyenne, Wyo.

The present play production season at the Cheyenne Senior High School (Thespian Troupe No. 370) began with the performance of *Dollars to Doughnuts*, given by the Junior Class on December 6. For their part, Thespians gave the one-acts, *Eddie Greets a Hero* and *Swept Clean Off Her Feet*, during the fall semester. Thespians also gave a demonstration on types of rehearsals for the speech and dramatics teachers at the State Convention held in October. Members of the Troupe also appeared in a radio broadcast on October 26. All dramatics activities are directed by Miss Mary E. Stewart.—Margaret Hay, Secretary.

### Rocky River, Ohio

Thespians of Troupe No. 65 at the Rocky River High School began the year of major plays with two highly successful performances of *Headed for Eden* on December 4, 5. *Highness*, given on October 27, was among the one-acts given during the fall semester. The remainder of the season will include the production of at least three more one-act plays and one major production in the spring. Miss Edith A. White directs dramatics and has charge of Thespian activities.—Nancy Street, Secretary.

### Massillon, Ohio

The "Thespian Masque," official publication of Thespian Troupe No. 178 at the Washington High School, continues to make its monthly appearance, each issue crowded with news items. Eight new members were added to the Troupe on January 2. The events of the day came to a climax with a Thespian Holiday Party held at the Y. M. C. A. A number of alumni members attended. The production dates for the third major play of the season have been designated as February 12 and 13. Full-length plays given so far this season are *The Male Animal* and *George Washington Slept Here*. We salute Mr. M. W. Wickersham and his lively Thespian organization.

### Greenwich, Conn.

Three performances of *June Mad* late in October marked the beginning of another year of dramatic successes at the Greenwich High School (Thespian Troupe No. 243) under the direction of Miss Madge Vest. The fall semester has also included the production of one-act plays and two performances of the operetta, *A Waltz*.



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*Dream*, on December 4, 5. Much time is being spent at the present time on the reading of plays with the hope of finding a suitable choice for the spring production.—*Barbara Dewey, Secretary.*

### Snyder, Texas

Members of Troupe No. 102 at the Snyder High School gave *The Cat and the Canary* on November 14 as their first long play of the present season, with Sponsor Rose Marie Clawson directing. The program indicated that Ray Martin and Doyle Stokes have achieved the rank of Honor Thespians, and that Kathrine Lynch rates as Star Thespian.

### Liberty, N. Y.

A very successful production of *The Charm School* on November 7 by the Senior Class marked the opening of the present dramatics season at the Liberty High School (Thespian Troupe No. 109). For its part the dramatics club gave the one-acts, *There is Always Tomorrow*, *Our Husband*, and *The Christmas Carol*, during the fall semester. An interesting and worthwhile event of the fall season was an exchange of one-act plays with two neighboring high schools. All dramatics work is directed by Miss Ethel R. Rice.—*Scharma Jean Freer, Secretary.*

### Kansas City, Kans.

Dramatics productions at the Wyandotte High School (Thespian Troupe No. 162) began on September 30 with a performance of the one-acts, *The Early Worm* and *Moonstruck*, given by the Dramatics Club. Three performances on December 10, 11, 12 of *The Fool*, given by the Senior Class, marked the opening of the season of full-length plays. Mr. Paul B. Williams has charge of all dramatics activities at this school.

### Webster Groves, Mo.

Another season of successful productions began for members of Thespian Troupe No. 191 of the

Webster Groves High School with their production of the three-act play, *Suspect*, performed on October 28, 29, 30, 31 and November 1. The second major play of the year will be given during National Drama Week, February 10-14. Miss Shirley L. Pratt is in charge of all dramatics.—*Lorna Maus, Secretary.*

### Charleston, W. Va.

Members of the recently established Troupe No. 121 at the Stonewall Jackson High School opened their 1941-42 season with the production of the comedy, *Best Years*, sponsored by the Junior Class on November 7. During the intermissions between acts members of the audience were asked to vote on the ending they preferred. (Three possible endings were suggested.) This interesting production was directed by Mrs. Ernest White, Troupe Sponsor.

### Pana, Ill.

Beginning with the Junior Class play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on November 4, dramatics students at the Pana High School (Thespian Troupe No. 219) began looking forward to a successful and enjoyable season. Thespian activities this year are under the direction of Miss Rosella Hawkins. The fall semester also saw the performance of the one-acts, *Alice Blue Gown*, *Pair of Lunatics*, and *Junior's Mustache*.

### Sylvania, Ohio

The 1941-42 season at the Burnham High School (Thespian Troupe No. 467) began with the production of *You Can't Take It With You* on November 5. The play was staged by the Speech Clubs. The one-act play, *The Clod*, was given in Toledo before the meeting of the Northwestern Ohio Speech teachers late in October, and will be entered in the Ohio High School Drama Festival this spring. Thespians now take up tickets, instead of the faculty, at all performances and are responsible for all make-up work. All dramatics work is under the capable and efficient leadership of Miss Margaret C. Fairchild.—*Marjor Fleming, Secretary.*

### Cincinnati, Ohio

Students of dramatics at the Western Hills High School (Thespian Troupe No. 286) opened their 1941-42 season with an enthusiastic performance of George M. Cohan's dramatization of *Seven Keys to Baldpate* on December 5. A large audience was present for the performance. Mrs. Vesta H. Watson, Troupe Sponsor, directed. Members of the troupe plan to enter the Southwestern Ohio High School Drama Festival which will be held at the University of Cincinnati on March 27, 28.

### Cincinnati, Ohio

A successful performance of the comedy, *Old Doc*, on December 5, marked the opening of the present dramatics season for members of the Sages Club (Thespian Troupe No. 460) at the Hughes High School. Several revisions in the play by Miss Erna Kruckemeyer resulted in a very pleasing performance for the large audience present. Miss Kruckemeyer is the author of several plays and adaptations.

### Youngstown, Ohio

The first major play, *Spooky Tavern*, given by members of the newly-established Troupe No. 479 at the Rayen School was given to an enthusiastic audience on October 29. The production was directed by Miss Lucille Lee. The Troupe was formally established early in November, with twelve students forming the charter roll. Their names are as follows: Robert Axtmann, Sonia Bradlyn, Maureen Eigner, Thomas Ewing, Joseph Flynn, Robert Hansen, Myron Malkin, Joan Rauhley, Richard Dignan, Myron Glass, Nancy Liebman, and Ruth Price.

### Superior, Neb.

"My cast did a beautiful job and the play had a professional touch about it" writes Sponsor Harold L. Ahrendts of his production of *Almost Eighteen* given on November 18 at the Superior High School (Thespian Troupe No. 337).

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# What's New Among Books and Plays

EDITED BY H. T. LEEPER

Review Staff: Donald Woods, Blandford Jennings, Marion Stuart, Kari Natalie Reed, Elmer S. Crowley, Mary Ella Boveé, Helen Movius and Virginia Leeper.

Reviews appearing in this department aim to help our readers keep up with recent books and plays. The opinions expressed are those of the reviewer, and mention of a book or play in this department does not necessarily mean that such a publication is recommended by THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN.

Row, Peterson & Co., Evanston, Ill.

*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, a new adaptation of Moliere's comedy, by Barnard Hewitt. 8 m., 4 w. Non-royalty. This adaptation will be welcomed by amateur groups everywhere, particularly by high school directors who are looking for a comedy of outstanding merit. As Prof. Hewitt so aptly points out in his preface, the plot of this time-honored play cannot and has not been modernized. The dialogue, on the other hand, can be given a modern touch and Prof. Hewitt has on the whole done a very satisfactory piece of work. In its present form the play is certainly actable, and aside from the fact that it offers rich entertainment as a theatre piece, it will prove a challenge to actors and directors alike. Students must study the roles closely and accurately, if the play is to be done well. Here is another adaptation of a classic play that every high school director should stage at one time or another. We sincerely hope that Thespian Sponsors give it the consideration it so well deserves.—E. B.

*Two Minutes To Go*, a football comedy in three acts, by Charles Quimby Burdette. 8 m. 8 w. extras. Percentage royalty. Although *Two Minutes To Go* offers some few problems in staging, it combines two great forces—athletics and dramatics. "Spike" Reagan has come to Arlington to coach football, but he finds himself facing great odds. The town demands a winning team regardless of the methods used, but Spike believes that football is important only when it serves the best interests of the boys. When he loses a game by refusing to use players who have broken training rules, the whole town is enraged even to the point of demanding his removal. Spike remains firm, and with the aid of his young wife and a few staunch friends he shows the little town of Arlington what real sportsmanship and championship should be. Since the cast is made up primarily of young characters and the actual football team can be used, this play offers something different for high school groups.—Elmer S. Crowley.

The Northwestern Press, 2200 Park Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

*Land of Liberty*, a drama of democracy in three acts, by Robert Ray. 3 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$10. This play concerns the things of more and more current interest, conscription, army camps, Nazi agents, plots, etc. Two cousins meet the question of army service in opposite manners. Donald, ready to start practicing medicine, volunteers, and is assigned to the nearby camp. Vincent seeks to evade the call and is caught in the trap of a Nazi agent who has rented a room in the house. After near tragedy stalks into the camp through his fault, Vincent's eyes are opened in time to catch the spy and prove himself a true American. If done in a restrained manner, this play could make an interesting and dramatic evening's performance in the line of Americanism.—Virginia Leeper.

*The Kid*, a comedy of youth in three acts, by Jon Shelton. 4 m., 4 w. Royalty, \$25. Teddy is at that stage of adolescence that furnishes smiles as well as a good bit of anxiety to adults, but is a very serious business to him. Though he is interested exclusively in music, his father wants him to learn his pharmaceutical business, which, however, seems on the verge of being lost. With the magnanimity of youth he uses the money given him by Gram for his musical education to save his father's business. This is a real comedy of

youth, with an interesting family-life story for the plot.—Virginia Leeper.

The Dramatic Publishing Co., 59 East Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

*My Heart's In High*, a comedy in three acts, by Anne Coulter Martens. 5 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$10. This is another of Anne Coulter Martens' charming family scenes. While mother dashes about designing a new dress to suit each mood, and neglected father putters about with his rose garden, seventeen-year-old Dorie develops the idea that she must "bring beauty into the lives of many." Her house design has just won a contest held by a firm of architects, with a position with the firm as the prize. But, since they have the idea that she is a boy, Dorie dresses in wig and men's clothing in an effort to impress the woman-hating interviewer. Dorie's boy-friends upset the apperact just as things are going well. Meanwhile Dorie's mother finds father's list of new rosebushes and thinks they are the names of girls. It takes all of Aunt Amity's ingenuity to straighten everyone out.—Harry T. Leeper.

*Wings Over Washington*, a mystery-comedy in three acts, by Clark Willard. 6 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$10. This is a typical detective mystery story with a timely slant. On a secluded island, a small group of scientists are working on a ray machine that will destroy anything the ray strikes. When the housemaid dies of poison intended for Dr. Hardy, the head inventor, it becomes evident that Nazi spies are among the group. The plot from there on deals with the efforts of the apparently preoccupied Dr. Hardy and his bright young secretary to hunt down the culprits. Among others of the cast are a mysterious housekeeper, a lady F.B.I. agent, an exotic Russian, and a "hick" policeman. High school level.—Harry T. Leeper.

Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., New York City.

*Ever Since Eve*, a comedy in three acts, by Florence Ryerson, and Colin Clements. 6 m., 5 w., 4 or 5 m. extras. Royalty, \$25. In *June Mad* and the present play, these collaborators have contributed a pair of well-nigh flawless plays about teen-age perplexities. This one depicts the efforts of Johnny Clover and Bill Erwin to keep the feminine influence out of the school paper they edit. But Susan Blake and Betsy Erwin nevertheless make themselves felt, with hilarious results. The whole thing is complicated by a measles epidemic and a no less disastrous intervention by one Lucybelle Lee, who is a typical Southern belle in the making. The father and mother, as always in Ryerson-Clements plays, are sometimes perplexed but always charming and human. This play can be strongly recommended as practically sure to please both cast and audience.—Blanford Jennings.

*Castles in the Air*, a comedy in three acts, by Hilda Manning. 4 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$10. This is a farce built around the character of Mr. A. Ellsworth Tootle, a gentleman capable of great self-appreciation but withal so soft-hearted that he is constantly promising what he cannot perform. His difficulties in making good with the inventive lodger, the ingenue who is out of a job, and the adolescent who wants a paying spot on an amateur hour, provide a good deal of hilarity mingled with embarrassment. The author's most remarkable achievement is in keeping a genuine sympathy on the part of the audience for anyone as fatuous as Tootle. He

has, however, failed to make Tootle's eventual winning of the love of the ingenue in any way convincing. The play is well-constructed and moves rapidly, though some of the characters are stereotyped.—*Blandford Jennings.*

Dramatist Play Service, 6 East 39th St., New York, N. Y.

*George Washington Slept Here*, a comedy in three acts, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. 9m., 8w. Royalty, \$50. This play represents a possibility for larger schools, with a more mature sense of appreciation and interpretation. The scope of characterization lies within the range of the more advanced group. The lines are well-written, with the customary zest and flourish of Hart and Kaufman. However, certain unsuitable lines and situations, for example—the final curtain scene—would necessitate altering. A simple suggestion is offered in the manuscript for the transformation of the set between Acts I and II, so that there are no difficulties of staging. There are some interesting effects to be obtained, such as the summer storm, with its thunder, lightning, and torrential downpour; the leaking roof; and the smoking chimney.—*Mary Ella Bovee.*

*Solo Readings for Radio and Class Work*, by Marjorie Seligman and Sonya Fogle. A collection of very brief monologues from the best contemporary plays: *My Dear Children*, *Stage Door*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Children's Hour*, *Dodsworth*, *American Landscape*, *First Lady*, *Susan and God*, *Skylark*, *Excursion*, *Dark Victory*, *The Women*, *What A Life*, *Whiteoaks*, *Dead End*, and many others. The selections are divided into groups for the user's convenience: Ingenue, Leading Woman, Character Woman, Juvenile, Leading Man, Character Man. This volume should be of inestimable value for classroom and speech laboratory work, and to amateur readers.—*Daniel Turner.*

Walter H. Baker Co., 178 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

*Dialect Workouts for the School Theatre*, a student manual with 36 selected scenes, by Dorothy Hopkins Kirkland and Rehn Scarborough. This book provides simple practice in dialect readings for class routine. There are several selections that can be used for contest work, though the authors did not intend this book to be used primarily for such purposes, as most of the selections are incomplete. The book also gives simple explanations of the major dialects that are easy for the beginner to understand and follow. In most speaking and drama classes, some work in dialect would be included, but most of the reorganized textbooks give few instructions along these lines. Therefore, this book is a fine supplement to the texts already in use and should be a handy addition to any drama library.—*May Ella Bovee.*

*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, a comedy in three acts, by John G. Fuller. 6 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$25. This is the latest version of Mark Twain's masterpiece of "time travel." The Connecticut Yankee entirely revises King Arthur's kingdom with modern football, radio, telephones, and even the corner drugstore. All this in the face of Merlin's spells and Queen Morgan Le Fay's evil machinations. This reviewer gets just as much kick as ever out of this yarn and feels sure that the average high school dramatic group will also. Costumes and technical difficulties are kept at a minimum. Only one set is needed.—*Harry T. Leeper.*

Longmans, Green and Co., 55 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

*A Swift Kick*, a comedy in three acts, by James F. Stone and Nathaniel E. Reed. 10 m., 4 w. Royalty, \$25.00. There is little between or under the lines in this play, but it is a truly hilarious comedy if ever one was written. The hero is Eros Sprockett, awkward, impulsive, and determined, who is urged by his associates to take upon himself the task of clearing all the crooks out of Centerville. Through three acts of merriment, Eros stumbles from one funny situation to another in the style of Harold Lloyd,

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The contest closes February 1, 1942, and manuscripts may be submitted any time up until then. All entries must bear a postmark not later than February 1, 1942. No decision will be announced before March 1, 1942.

and ends as the hero of the town when the curtain comes down at the end of the third act. The play is packed with action and farcical situations and even the most critical audience will thoroughly enjoy it. The pie-throwing episode in the third act may present some production problems; otherwise the play is one that any high school group can give with considerable satisfaction.—*E. B.*

The Dryden Press, 103 Park Ave., New York City.

*Producing the Play*, by John Gassner. This book comes as near to covering the field completely as one book could do without becoming encyclopedic in size. There is not the space here to enumerate the branches of play production that are covered. Suffice it to say that if anything is omitted this reviewer failed to notice the omission.

The ring of authority the book carries is increased by the inclusion of sketches on specific parts of the field by a score of outstanding experts in those fields. For example, Margaret Webster contributes the chapter on directing Shakespeare's plays, Mordecai Gorelik the chapter on designing the play. The last part of the book is made up of Philip Barber's *Scene Technician's Handbook*. Its valuable collection of detailed analyses and working drawings certainly need no introduction here.

This reviewer is quite enthusiastic about this book, and feels somewhat surprised that so valuable a volume is priced no higher than it is. It will be a valuable addition to any director's book shelf.—*H. T. Leeper.*

Wetmore Declaration Bureau, 1631 South Paxton Street, Sioux City, Iowa.

*The Man Without a Country*, a one-act drama, by Pauline Phelps. 5 m., 2 w. 30 min., no royalty. This is a timely play of patriotism, adapted from the story of the same name by Edward Everett Hale. The play has a strong appeal which arrests the attention as the main character changes from a flippant, half-defiant youth, receiving his sentence with a spirit of bravado, to a repentant old man whose heart yearns for news of his country which he will never see.—*Helen Movins.*

Ivan Bloom Hardin Co., 3806 Cottage Grove Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

*The Waltz*, a humorous monologue, by Dorothy Parker, in which a girl gives a rapturous, gushing line of remarks to her partner during a waltz, interspersed with her true feelings expressed to herself as he treads heavily on her feet from time to time.

*A Visit to Berchtesgaden*, a dramatic reading by Hillel Bernstein. Hitler, in his mountain retreat, is visited by a stranger who takes him back through the centuries to view a more complete victory than any Hitler has achieved. It is the victory of the Jews at the battle of Jericho, and the stranger is Joshua, their leader. Hitler is astonished to learn that once the Jews had the victorious armies and called themselves the chosen people.—*Helen Movins.*

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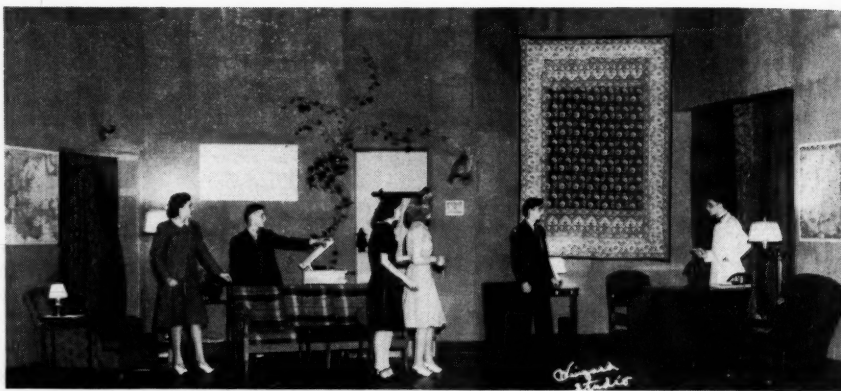
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## Our Periodicals in Review

REVIEWED BY MRS. HARRISON J. MERRILL

Formerly Director of Dramatics, State Teachers College, California, Pa.

**THE HEPBURN STORY.** By Lupton A. Wilkinson and J. Bryan, III. *Saturday Evening Post* for November 29, 1941, December 6 and 18, 1941. It is always entertaining to read the life story of an actress, but when that actress is Katharine Hepburn, it approaches a sensation. Ever since she came into the limelight, you have heard fantastic rumors regarding her. This article reads almost like a case study of a problem child. Her unusual home environment as much as anything else has not only contributed to her success as one of America's most unique actresses but it also has contributed to many unhappy pitfalls. Perhaps reading the account of her early youth—the suicide of her brother, the crusading of her father and mother, and her misadventures at school—will give you an understanding of this most misunderstood actress.

**SCHOOLGIRL WALKS INTO THEATER AND COMES OUT WITH LEAD IN HIT SHOW.** *Life* for December 15, 1941. Because it's a hit show, because it's about people your own age, and because your troupe will be producing it within the next few years, you should not only look at the pictures and read the captions regarding *Junior Miss*, but you should cut out this article and save it for future reference. No less than eight scenes from the play are shown.

**LATE EXTRA! MURDER IN SCOTLAND.** By Margaret Webster. *New York Times* for November 9, 1941. In keeping with the sensational happenings of our times, Miss Webster, the director of Maurice Evans in *Macbeth*, has written an informative account of her research on the notorious criminal, Macbeth. Mrs. Siddons, for instance, has a record of almost every breath she took and every gesture she made. Both scientists and quacks have contributed volumes. She says that Shakespeare, unfortunately, devotes little time to exposition in his plays, thus leaving many gaps for the director to fill. He actually begins the play, *Macbeth*, in the middle of the broil. This is a good article for your English literature class to review.

**GRACE GEORGE ON THE CRAFT OF COMEDY.** By Helen Ormsbee. *New York Herald Tribune* for November 9, 1941. Here is a revealing interview with one of America's leading actresses on that intangible delight called comedy. Of all the types of plays, Miss George prefers comedy. "The sweetest sound of all is a laugh that starts in the front rows and sweeps like a breeze through the whole house." She loves the immediate audience response that derives from that type of play.

"My advice to aspiring comedians? Why, I haven't any. A person must have an instinct

for comedy. You can learn other forms of acting, but nobody can teach you to see what's funny."

Comedy is delicate. Even a cough in the audience at the wrong moment will ruin a laugh. The actor and the spectators must be in complete accord. Perhaps you Thespians may gain some ideas from Miss George on how to experiment on your audiences to gain the greatest response.

**PROPAGANDA AMERICAN STYLE.** By Robert T. Oliver. *Emerson Quarterly* for December, 1941. Since propaganda seems to be a world-wide practice during these eventful days, this appears to be an appropriate time to discuss its effects on the American theater. Dr. Oliver of Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, has traced our theater from its beginning down to the present time pointing out the inroads of Americanism on our stage. Almost without exception, those plays commanding the greatest popular success extolled the virtues of democracy and the American way of life. Our whole Little Theater movement seems to have evolved from this national urge. Thespian playwrights might take a "tip" from these findings.

**FIRST NIGHTS AND PASSING JUDGMENTS.** By George Jean Nathan. *Esquire* for January, 1942. This attack on Frank Craven's criticism of the modern theater has several meaty portions worthy of your consumption. Mr. Nathan rejoices that the theater isn't as it used to be in the days when such plays as *The Witching Hour* and *The Girl of the Golden West* held sway. He deplores such "claptrap." He also praises the advantages that Equity has brought to the actor, the high standards of decorum exacted from the actor, and the discontinuance of bribing the critics prior to an opening.

You will read with interest his criticism of the Theatre Guild's "bill of fare" for the season and may thus glean some information on play selection.

**A FREE THEATRE FOR A FREE PEOPLE.** By Margarete Bieber. *Theatre Arts* for December, 1941. This will be of special interest to you Thespians, as Dr. Bieber has traced the early Greek Theatre through the time of Thespis, our first actor. Thespis was an actor of tragedies, who stepped out from the chorus to read his lines. Tragedy meant in those days: "song of the goat," meaning song of the followers of Dionysius. As these early Greek plays were controlled by the state and given as religious festivals, they were open to all whether one could pay the price of admission or not. Such was the democratic theatre during the Sixth Century B. C.

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